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J. A. Mullens.





THE FAIR ISLAND;

A Poem,

IN SIX CANTOS.

BY

EDMUND PEEL,

AUTHOR OF "THE RETURN," "JUDGE NOT,"

&c. &c.

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TO
JAMES AND ROSA WHITE,
OF BONCHURCH,
WHO "FIND
SERMONS IN STONES, AND GOOD IN EVERY THING,"
LOVE AND MEMORY
WOULD UTTER
"THOUGHTS THAT VOLUNTARY MOVE
HARMONIOUS NUMBERS."



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THE FAIR ISLAND.

CANTO I.



CANTO I.

I.

FROM Albion sever'd, to the noonday sun,
Looms on the mariner a beacon-land,
About whose base the great sea-waters run,
Climb the tall rock, and flood the level sand,
Lash'd by the storm, or by the zephyr fann'd;
Now, tumbled headlong with a deafening roar
And foamy rage against the stubborn strand;
Now, reef and weed and pebble gliding o'er
With gentle murmur, stream of music evermore!

II.

It dawneth !—Out of folded darkness rearing
A blood-red banner, quell the billowy deep,
Darter of fire, and like a god appearing
Above the waters, scatter dewy sleep,
Tinging the mountain-top, and orient steep
Unsullied—smooth—sublime—to pierce ere long
The woods and valleys. Let the ripple leap
In light ! for hark ! the tremulous leaves among
Sing, as the dewdrops flash, the birds their matin song.

III.

Headland, appointed in the morning beam
A rosy wreath—a golden crown—to wear ;
To glow amid the zenith, and to gleam
In the wan moonlight—guard yon haven fair,
Fix'd as a star benign in upper air.
I feel it good to commune here alone
With Him who piled the mountains, clothed the bare
With beauty, made the soul of nature known,
And gave the tongue of thought a reverential tone.

IV.

Queller of ocean's overweening might,
Aërial promontory, power serene—
And thou, lone watcher on the beetling height,
Whose raven plumes against the sun are seen
To glance and flash the glittering Alps between—
Enjoy your wide dominion, long as sea
And sky shall clang around you ; or the green
Enflower'd upland hither draw the bee,
And many a moth blue-wing'd, and chirper bounding free.

V.

To Carmel heaved over a gulf profound,
Tracking the locust, nimble thought will fly,
And muse on him who brooded on the ground,
Sad to have shut the floodgates of the sky,
And wrung the dewy brow of Hermon dry.
Alas ! for Israel wasted by sharp woes !
For Canaan pined with a long agony !
Elijah is not here ! yet—bounty flows
As when a little cloud out of the deep arose !

VI.

Your various wonders, earth, and sea, and sky,
What tongue can tell of, or what touch portray ?
O for a calmer heart, a clearer eye,
T' enjoy your beauty !—Here, the Culver Bay
Bathes in a bluer heaven the mountain gray ;
There, ruddier shows than Belus' wave imbued
With young Adonis' blood. That open way
Of thymy fragrance yields the climber food :
Can honied Hybla shed a sweeter solitude ?

VII.

Bright as a voyager sublime in air
Over the Tropic-flood, yon sail would fain
Double the Bluff beyond it grim and bare,
Dun-heaving out of the refulgent main.
A stream of sparkles o'er the purple plain
Ripples : the smooth hills rounding east and west
Shine in the centre, links of one fair chain !
Wake, dreamy woodland ! voices of the blest,
With morning-incense, rise above the place of rest !

VIII.

Where to the north the snowy steeps descend,
An inner bay, with finely-marbled floor,
In which the colours of the rainbow blend,
Opens on such as winding down explore
Cavern and cliff and solitary shore,
Here white and glistening, *there* of iron hue,
To trickle, when the torrents cease to roar
Thro' rifts of red, of yellow, and of blue,
In drops of crystal light or many-colour'd dew.

IX.

Save where the sea fowl, as in sportive mood
The sands imprinting, one another chase,
No cry, no step disturbs the solitude :
There, by the billows hull'd, their rolling base
With meditation keeping pensive pace,
An Ethiop held communion with the sky,
As he whom Philip found in desert place,
Bent on that book with reverential eye
Which bringeth life to light and immortality¹.

¹ " On one of these rocks I observed a man sitting with a book, which he was reading. The place was near two hundred yards perpendicularly below me; but I discovered by his dress, and by the colour of his features, contrasted with the

X.

In lofty temple all alone he seem'd
With Him who searches out our secret ways :
Of other presence he had never dream'd,
Remote from human haunt and common gaze.
The Christian convert panted not for *praise*,
But smote his breast, and mourn'd his heart of stone ;
Redeeming love to ponder with amaze,
Till many a tear and penitential groan
Before the Mercy-seat his misery make known.

XI.

Not many, by the world accounted great
Or wise or noble, demigods on earth,
In war, in song, in science, or in state,
The fall acknowledge, or deplore the dearth
Of native dignity and moral worth :
With Saul, they persecute the chosen seed,
With Nicodemus, doubt the second birth :
Benighted Negro ! happier in thy *need*,
Than he who felt no want, recounting each good deed !

white rocks beside him, that it was no other than my Negro disciple with a Bible in his hand." See Rev. Legh Richmond's "Negro Servant," in his "Annals of the Poor."

XII.

Beyond where bow'd the sable knee in prayer,
Behind the cape of oriental sheen,
'Mid arbours musical as warbling air
When young-eyed daisies star the dewy green,
An opening haven wavy lawns between
Bosoms the west, expanding by degrees :
On either brow a village crowns the scene
With spires that overtop the forest trees :
Downs spread—for climbing sheep to pasture where they
please.

XIII.

We stood in Bembridge, on a ridge of stone
Between two waters : on the narrow ledge,
Dabbled with briny weed, the noonday shone,
Glow'd on the lake, and smote the gleamy sedge,
And flash'd in bubbles on the sea's white edge.
The breezes lay in slumber on the shore,
Or, moulting, waited for a breath to fledge
Wings soft as down, strong-pinion'd, voyaging o'er
Earth, sea, and sky, to serve the Mover evermore.

XIV.

But now the winds and waters are at rest :
The sea-boy, coated like the shaggy bear,
Hugging a naked pole with rugged breast,
And climbing high, pants for a breath of air ;
The dark-eyed girl, tossing her raven hair
Back from a brow clear as the summer skies,
Feels on the lifted lids a fiery glare,
And holds a rounded arm before her eyes,
Dazzled, as one who sees the golden future rise.

XV.

Come, if the Babel of the world have ceased
To move thee, come and find a new delight
In the boon heart of nature, in the least
As in the greatest, from the solar height
Down to the dewy gem, and flower star-bright.
Mark the blue waters of the swelling sea
Shower'd on the bar in flakes of snowy white ;
The limpid haven trace, smooth as may be
A bay of heavenly calm, or river flowing free.

XVI.

Glide, liquid light, melodious undersong,
Down with the tide below the harbour-buoy,
In many a coil and dimple roll'd along!
With the round pebble let the ripple toy,
While, deep and calm, as in a dream of joy,
Sleeps with Alcyone the blue-hair'd power!
I would that evil might no more annoy,
Ruffling the plumage of the wingèd hour,
The pleasaunce of our path, the quiet of our bower!

XVII.

Over the Yar, meandering, blue and clear
The sky bends lovingly; the bladed grass
Twinkles; and where the laughing woods appear,
Their elf-locks smoothing in a sea of glass,
A golden splendour bathes the leafy mass.
In each green glade, on either pastoral hill
Deep-imaged in the pool, or o'er the pass
White-gleaming, sleeps the sunshine where it will,
E'en on the tomb so pale and stony lying still.

XVIII.

Fierce are thy beams, down shooting orb of day
 On earth ; but sacred is the dust below,
 Tranced till the time of trial pass away !
 Still in our embers will affection glow,
 Penitence plead, and mercy overflow ;
 And patience triumph over mortal pain
 With thee, my brother ! knowledge yearn to know
 More ; and, abiding faith with " little Jane ¹,"
 Hope in the Word of Power to raise her up again !

XIX.

"The world knows nothing of its greatest men ²!"—
 Virtue may go down to the grave unknown,
 Untimely gather'd in her native glen ;
 Or, where the children of affliction groan,
 Forgetting in another's grief her own,—
 A watcher o'er the dying till she die ;
 Or, in the midst of wrong, dwelling alone
 Unblench'd and unappall'd, embosom'd high
 Above the billowy world in the cerulean sky.

¹ Little Jane—"The Young Cottager" of Legh Richmond—sleeps in Brading churchyard.

² Taylor's "Philip Von Artevelde."

XX.

Behind the steeps of morning, ocean-braced,
The Culver's airy dwelling, we are told,
A village lies embower'd, in which is traced
The march of time through Norman arches old,
That look religion, bending to uphold
The Church; as those inwoven elms withstand
The sea-blast with the rolling billows roll'd,
In azure caves by sylvan arches spann'd,
Now laid, or on thy bay, blue-girdled Yaverland!

XXI.

Long may that hamlet feel the liquid gush
Of natural music!—glen and grove resound
With merle melodious and tuneful thrush;
And many a mellow note of summer-sound,
When with new life the cawing elms rebound!
For you, that hail the jocund heart of Spring,
May early violets imbue the ground,
And flaunting daffodils, in faëry ring,
Around the fringed pool a golden glory fling!

XXII.

Not in Aonia, by the humid edge
Of clear Ceph̄isus, brighter hues are seen ;
Nor by the lake Cop̄ais, wreath'd with sedge ;
Nor where the Muses o'er a fountain lean
In Helicon—the fabled Hippocrene !
No gaudier flower thy dewy marge supplies,
Castalian spring, nor Thespia's fluid sheen,
In which Narcissus view'd, with fond surprise,
The varying cheek of love, and beauty's conscious eyes.

XXIII.

Where, lower down, the border of a wood,
Drips with salt ooze and spangs of ocean spray,
In olden time, a wallèd city stood,
O'er which the Russell held superior sway,—
A name renownèd in the latter day.
All outward traces of a town are gone,
Save what the worshippers of Eld, in bay
And brake and long grass diving, light upon,—
The fossil bones, unblest, of buried Woolverton.

XXIV.

They tell you how, when Bembridge was unknown,
And older Brading but an infant town,
Against the sunrise walls and gates of stone
Flash'd, and Religion wore a triple crown,
Till Mammon paved the way to vile renown :
Then in a moment Retribution came,
As when the cities of the plain sank down,
Beneath a flood of lava and of flame,
Into the pool obscene of everlasting shame.

XXV.

The tempter came in guise of an old man
Of grave demeanour, weather-worn and spare,
And swart as those who lead a caravan
On thro' a fiery land of drought and glare,
A weary caravan of pain and care.
It was the summer, when at eventide
A merchant, opening out his treasures rare,
The various wants of rich and poor supplied,
And having served them, pass'd, nor longer would abide.

XXVI.

Out by the seaward gate they saw him pass :
One met him, later, gliding darkly by,
As glides a shadow o'er the downy grass,
Till, having reach'd the ghastly chalk on high,
He seem'd to melt into the dewy sky.
The hermit of the Culver (for he bore
That name in Woolverton) again drew nigh ;
And, having soon disposed of all his store,
Stole thro' a sallyport, and vanish'd as before.

XXVII.

Strange—was it not ? and stranger still appear'd
To trust who could not, or who would not pay :
It boded them no good, the wealthy fear'd ;
What right had any one to throw away
On a base churl so knightly an array ?
The merchant only whisper'd in the ear
And touch'd the forehead, wherefore who could say,
Of each poor debtor : Cunning 'gan to leer,
And gloat upon the cheek of varying hope and fear.

XXVIII.

Anon came rumour flying thro' the town
Of a rich burgher over night waylaid,
And robb'd, and murder'd ; of a barn burn'd down,
A dwelling plunder'd, and a trust betray'd
With ruffian outrage on a plighted maid ;
But how, or where, or when, was little known.
Deep in the murder'd man a Spanish blade
Was found, stuck fast betwixt the jointed bone :
But none its owner knew, or, knowing him, would own.

XXIX.

A yeoman fancied he had seen the knife
For sale, one evening, in the stranger's store :
They ask'd him would he swear away the life
Of a fair trader from a foreign shore ?
He made them no reply, but mused the more !
The hermit of the Culver came at last,
And, having heard the dreadful tidings, tore
His beard, and dust upon his raiment cast,
And dumb with horror stood, and stared as one aghast.

XXX.

Time fled, and ever left the merchant free
To trust a people unprepared to pay :
They thought a patron of the poor must be
An angel in disguise, and oft would pray
Of him to tarry till the break of day :
But ever, as of old, with low salaam,
And right hand on the heart, he went his way,
Ere to the Virgin floated on the calm
That hymn which rises up when heaven is dropping balm.

XXXI.

Down in a hollow, by the Druid-wood,
A fountain pure out of a cave of stone
Well'd : a stone cross above the fountain stood,
Rough-hewn, on which a writing, overgrown
With moss and lichen, made the future known.
“ While renneth clere the water of the well,
The lord of Yaverlande shal kepe his owne ;
But if blood stain it, firy wrath and fel
Shal brenne the feloun brood ; and Culver ring hir knell.”

XXXII.

One evening from the wood the traveller came
In trouble and alarm : he had been told
Of one in a grey cowl, of evil fame,
In knowledge mighty as in malice old,
Coil'd in black arts and treasons manifold :
The same was coming under filmy wing
Of twilight, whether to purloin their gold,
Or poison in its source the blessèd spring,
He knew not—who could plumb the deep imagining?

XXXIII.

A murmur, ominous of evil, rose—
The people hurried forth, and while they plann'd
Revenge, the shades of night began to close
Around the Holy Well ; a gloomy band
Watching the road that led to Yaverland.
At length one came, grey-hooded, gown'd in grey,
A palm-branch holding in the better hand,
And in the left a staff, and making way
Up to the cross of stone, kneel'd, as about to pray ;

XXXIV.

And bowing down that venerable head,
Which on the Tomb of tombs had bended low,
He shook the water ! then an arrow sped
Thro' his left temple, barb'd with mortal throe ;
And blood into the well began to flow :
Then gory Murder plash'd the stony stair,
And dabbled all the cave with crimson woe :
The dire contriver thro' the murky air
Fled ; but he could not fly the shadow of despair.

XXXV.

The rabble slunk away, save three or four
Who stoop'd to raise the body, when a friar
Beholding blood upon the moonlit floor,
Enter'd, and gazing on the sainted sire,
Sank down in awe, and then rose up in ire,
And, like a madman, on the sons of Cain
Call'd down the vengeance of eternal fire ;
For they the patron of the Well had slain,
The palmer who had borne the cross of woe and pain.

XXXVI.

Lone on a promontory, whose bald height
Outjutting over the black waters shone,
The Russell linger'd in the pale moonlight,
If peradventure he might find alone,
And track to secret lair, the grim unknown.
At length, o'ershadowing the northern slope,
He saw a shape across the moonshine thrown :
It near'd, and near'd, and o'er the gleamy cope
Hung—the pale watcher held his breath 'twixt fear and
hope.

XXXVII.

The mountain, rounded o'er the white sea-wall,
Sheer, in the silence, fell from sky to sea :
The knight below him felt the pebble fall
Down—down—and hover'd, not from terror free,
On the dim border of the dread “to be.”
To him more terrible than trampling host
The crumbling chalk ! more terrible to see
The shadowy stranger gliding like a ghost
On the fine edge sublime of that precipitous coast !

XXXVIII.

But, on a sudden, from the treacherous edge
Turning, to baulk the ruin deep and wide,
That apparition under a green ledge
Dived, through an opening in the mountain-side,
To noble Theobald a welcome guide ;
Who now, the danger of the nether deep
Avoiding, enter'd with a quiet glide
The cavern, winding inward from the steep,
Determined till the dawn a jealous watch to keep.

XXXIX.

Vain thought ! enchantment drowsed the dragon eyes,
And held the warrior in a radiant hall
Bedropt with emerald and ruby dyes
And amethystine, waved from wall to wall,
A sea of sapphire deepening over all.
High in a niche of lunar light, alone
He sat, unconscious of the dewy fall,
Like to a pagan idol on a throne,
A statue pale as death, and silent as a stone.

XL.

Then came a murmur, like a dungeon'd wave
Far down, or sea-wind in the hollow blue :
The captive lady of the vocal cave
Round her a coil of lamentation threw,
Again ! and yet again ! and ever new.
As, in a storm, above the rack of fear
Rides Hope, sublime and beautiful to view,
The thunder tuning to the troubled ear,
So, in the darkest dream will starry shapes appear :

XLI.

From out of chaos an Aonian air
Will come upon us, like a balmy wind
Upon the rear of winter, charming care ;
And, all unmindful of the wrack behind,
Unfolding Eden to the vernal mind.
The dreamer, late by shadows overcast
Of the unimaginable undefined,
With eyes wide-open staring as aghast,
Smiled, as the vision changed, and music floated past.

XLII.

Bland airs, and specious beauty, ear and eye
Led captive, such as o'er the Tyrrhene wave
Drew, long a stranger to his native sky
And home, and all the wandering heart will crave,
The king of Ithaca, the wise and brave.
Roused by the potent sorcery of sound,
Unwonted motion stirr'd the goblin-cave ;
Sly feet stole, catlike, o'er the magic ground,
And worms voluminous roll'd, and coil'd them round and
round.

XLIII.

Then bray'd the dragon-brood, and lute and lyre
Fled, and a clangour thro' the cavern rang,
As when to Moloch thro' the thirsty fire
Men haled their children, while a brazen clang
Flouted the bitter cry and mortal pang.
Then, in the middle of the charmed floor,
One round and round an incantation sang,
And lo, a table, whose illusive store
Shone like the fabled fruit upon the Dead Sea shore !

XLIV.

The guests had each been branded on the brow ;
Their eyes, all stony, look'd a dumb despair ;
And yet in Woolverton had been, ere now,
Like forms and faces. Over them in air
A vulture hung, and with a greedy glare
Look'd down, while hunger gnaw'd the dungeon wall :
Then horror seized the sleeper by the hair !
He leap'd up wildly, and began to call
Upon the Name unnamed in the Tartarean hall.

XLV.

Vanish the dreams and phantoms of the night !
Fierce on their rearward glared a fiery flash !
The bolted thunder o'er the cloven height
Roll'd, and the rocking headland, crash on crash,
Fell with a sullen plunge and misty splash !
Struck down and wounded by a stony wedge,
The Russell, mindless of the crimson gash,
Lay, in the dawning, on a narrow ledge
That overhung the deep : life trembled on the edge !

XLVI.

When the white fog-wave surging up the steep,
'Gan, in the glow of morn, to melt away,
And light to fill each dimple of the deep,
The knight look'd out beyond the northern bay,
And, lo! a royal fleet at anchor lay!
Arm'd boats are gliding by the Foreland shore,
Full-mann'd, refulgent in the golden ray,
With orient helm and amber-dropping oar,
And beamy spear star-bright, irradiate more and more.

XLVII.

Chafed by the flaunting of the banner'd foe,
The lord of Yaverland from sea to sky
Look'd up, and, mindful of the gulph below,
Follow'd an elfin track, with desperate eye,
That inward from the danger wound on high;
And laying hold on that Almighty Hand
Which leads the rock-goat, scared by savage cry,
O'er the white ridges of the billowy land,
He drew him up, and stood—where scarce the seamews
stand.

XLVIII.

Then, turning from the deep, with dagger keen,
He scoop'd out stair on stair, toiling amain
To climb the naked chalk : then would he lean
Forward, with dazzled eyes and dizzy brain,
And feel that flesh is weak, and labour vain.
At length, with hope ascending, by degrees
He topp'd the crest of danger and of pain,
Grasp'd the green turf with clinging hands and knees,
And spurn'd the tufted pink—the darling of the seas.

XLIX.

Faint on the reeling earth, as in a swoon,
He lay : on either eyelid hung a cloud
Of horror undefined : so lour'd at noon
The sky, with supernatural blackness bow'd,
On the pale faces of the conscious crowd.
A prayer for help the wounded man preferr'd ;
And, lo ! a friar, with healing art endow'd,
And daily charity in deed and word !
The knight, reviving, spoke—the monk, obedient, heard.

L.

“ Look to the ramparts ! bid De Heyno look ;
Man the sea-wall, and double-guard the tower !
Let Urry mount and prick to Carisbrook,
And tell De Langford how, this very hour,
The French at anchor ride, and launch their power.
Bid Norreys raise the villages and farms,
And hence to Knighton all the country scour ;
Let Ashey-beacon redden with alarms,
La Rye send bowmen out, and Brading men-at-arms !

LI.

“ The vale of Morton, and the ridge beyond
And hollow way, let Oglander maintain !
De Wode and Milton, Yar and Yaverland,
The knight of Woolverton will hold amain,
With serried spears, and arrows thick as rain.
I charge the lords of Aula and De Lisle,
From steep Saint Lawrence down to Borwood-plain,
To keep each craggy gorge and deep defile :
Go ; and thine errand done, pray for our native Isle.”

LII.

The golden hours run down, The warrior pale
Sat on his war-horse, near the western gate
Of flaming Woolverton, in radiant mail,
And helm red-flashing as with wrath and hate :
To save the city he had come too late !
Up the main river, ere the morning rose,
The Gaul had glided by without debate
Or check or challenge : sunk in deep repose,
The very sentries slept—in stole the wary foes.

LIII.

They landed on the quay, and having slain
The nodding archer, steep'd in drowsy mead,
And such as, far outnumber'd, fought in vain,
The seaward gate they open, as agreed,
To the main body—doom'd, ere long, to bleed !
All hope and memory of fair renown,
Of laurell'd victory and knightly deed,
Soon in low thoughts and sensual joys they drown—
Rapine and rape and murder seize the naked town.

LIV.

Yet, prostrate thus, and taken by surprise,
It fell not unavenged—a passive prey :
Each for his hearth and home, and those dear eyes
Dearer to him and brighter than the day,—
Fought with a desperate strength that struck dismay.
From house to house, from street to street, red Death,
With fire and sword and ruffian dirk made way,
Affronting Heaven, and quicken'd by the breath
Of Cain defying Cain !—Where dwell the sons of Seth ?

LV.

Back from the spoil an angry trumpet calls
The stragglers ;—some to perish on the plain ;
Some, gorged with plunder, while they grasp the walls,
Or amid red-hot rafters crawl with pain,
To feel the vengeance of the quiver'd train ;
For either wood is fledged with wingèd woe !
Who reach the river, with their life-blood stain
The waters !—then the leader of the foe
Bade clear the bristling heights, and ragged skirts below.

LVI.

Meanwhile, alighting, one with hopeful look
And welcome tidings hail'd the British knight :
“ They come, the bravest spears of Carisbrook !
Sir John de Langford on the vantage-height
Pricks on amain with still-increasing might ;
The lord of Wooton over Ashey-down,
And lord of Nunwell, with Sir John unite ;
De Gorges, and the knight of Alverstown,
And young De Bosco, burn for battle and renown.

LVII.

“ But see, the baffled enemy, in force,
Would cross the river ; clouds of foot prepare
To scour the woods, and sweep the water-course ! ”
“ And they are welcome, Urry, all who dare
Storm our rough fortress, steep as turret-stair !
Go, range the bowmen yonder, while I ford
The river with our horse ; for, lo ! in air,
The banner of Saint George, and his bright sword !
And, hark ! a brazen cry to fray the pirate horde ! ”

LVIII.

Through Morton-gap the beamy spears defile,
And fiery squadrons, pouring o'er the plain
By Yarbridge : higher, to the north, meanwhile,
The light-arm'd infantry and archer-train,
Extending o'er the ridge, a thicket gain.
As when a tiger, thirsting after blood,
In Niger moved to quench the burning pain,
Doth meet a lion—champion of the flood ;
So France and England, chafed with indignation, stood.

LIX.

Gall'd by the shafts of vengeance on his right,
The bold invader launch'd a nimble band
Against the tangled ground, to close in fight
With Oglander and Hackett, hand to hand,
Disputing inch by inch each foot of land ;
But the sharp axe, and broadsword biting deep,
And barbèd arrow, from the mound full-mann'd,
Drove them, no more to storm the stubborn keep,
Pierced through and through, cut down, or tumbled from
the steep.

LX.

Then bray'd a trumpet ; and a voice more clear
And thrilling shouted o'er the terrible blast,
" Charge !" and, as *one*, with pointed sword and spear,
On hooves of light, the British host swept past
(Fiercer than Thracian horses and more fast),
To meet the rush of fiery-hearted France,
Black-maned, tempestuous, as the lightning cast
On the dazed eye of battle : Death, advance
Thy shadowy squadrons, horse to horse, and lance to lance !

LXI.

The shock, the plunge, the waving up and down
O'er fields incarnadine ; the deadly thrust,
And the fell cleaving of the iron crown ;
The mortal agony, the greedy lust
Of purple honour humbled in the dust ;—
I have not heart to sing ; for thou, De Lisle,
Art but a name ! De Gorges' sword is rust !
No more shall victory on Langford smile,
Nor cheer the Russell dying for his native isle !

LXII.

He, in the thick of battle unobserved,
Had cross'd the stream, and pierced an open flank
(The left wing having from the centre swerved),
And roll'd the broken war rank over rank
Confounded : some in bloody marish sank,
Or floundering, men and horses, in the mud,
Felt the fierce pricker, spear'd from either bank ;
Some hurry to the boats, some ride the flood ;
While red the river runneth down with human blood.

LXIII.

A panic, glancing from the helm of Fear,
Shot to the centre ! “Sauve qui peut !” a cry
Heard on a day more dreadful, when the cheer
Of British soldiers shook the Belgian sky,
Now quiver'd on the lid of agony,
Flush'd the pale cheek, and drown'd the dying moan :
The Russell, for his country proud to die,
Look'd up,—for hearth, for altar, and for throne
Devoted to the death,—and died without a groan ¹ !

¹ In the reign of Edward III., the French landed at St. Helen's were met by the islanders, under Sir John de Langford, Constable of Carisbrooke ; Sir Bartholomew de Lisle, and Sir Theobald Russell, wardens of the island ; and were driven back to their ships with loss. Sir Theobald Russell was killed in action.

LXIV.

Honour to him, and to his country peace!
Peace to the commonwealth of humankind!
That war for ever from the world might cease,
And mutual charity the nations bind,
And emulation be no more unkind!
Meanwhile, to such as would redeem a land
From spoil and death, be deathless praise assign'd!
Whether a Wolfe or Moore from high command,
Fall, or a Worsley lead the patriotic band¹!

LXV.

Peaceful as any nook of meadow-ground
In pastoral England, sleeps the battle-plain,
And open turf with quiet girded round
In the blue air: Hope soweth not in vain!
Joy in due time will reap the golden grain!
And if on woman-born fall, even *here*,
The common lot of labour and of pain,
Yet, pain is partial—love will labour cheer,
And Danger only dwell in visionary fear.

¹ In Henry VIII.'s reign, or in Edward VI.'s, or in both, the French landed in force, and were driven back by Richard Worsley, Captain of the island.

LXVI.

Imagination, out of air or earth,
Will shape a phantom in the twilight hour,
Call from the deep a supernatural birth,
People the ferry-boat, or on the tower
Of sainted Helen post a watchful power ;
To vanish *these* when challenged, *those* to cheat
Indignant Charon of his proper dower,
Some growing hoary where the waters meet,
Some on the ripple seen to glance with gleamy feet.

LXVII.

Blessèd are ye, remote from fields of blood,
And tyranny's wide-wasting overflow,
Who but *imagine* the tormented flood,
But drain the vial of *ideal* woe !
The *real* vintage may ye never know !
Never among you sound the baleful cry
Of war, the thunder of the trampling foe !
With Freedom dwell, beneath a fresher sky
Than Tempe breathed of old, or dew-lipp'd Arcady.

THE FAIR ISLAND.

CANTO II.

CANTO II.

I.

WHETHER to climb a region of the sun
Waved up and down ; or under osier shade
To see the rivulet in silver run,
And draw the lurker out of ambuscade ;
Whether the plain in floral pomp display'd
To range ; or pace the billow-beaten strand,
What time the thunder-bearing ships have stay'd
Their course beneath the shadow of the land ;—
Such choice might win old Time in silent poise to stand !

II.

Did he not hold, impatient of delay,
Red Gibeon, pawing on the lofty place,
When Uriel—radiant angel of the day—
Check'd at a word his chariot's fiery race ?
But now the glowing hours move on apace—
Love dreameth they will hover round some spot
Of beauty or of melancholy grace ;
While musing Memory on one green plot
Beneath a grey old tower, their flight regardeth not.

III.

Who would not linger in the bower of Morn,
Muse on the mountain, dive into the dell,
And hear the heath-bee wind her buglehorn
On high, or gurgle out of a clear cell
Whence dewy droppings as of amber well ?
Who, looking down from Nunwell's pastoral height
On a boon region where the gentle dwell,
Who would not pray, that never blast nor blight,
Nor canker may deflower the garden of delight ?

IV.

Round Brading, fields of golden promise lie,
Rich plains and vales of plenty ; each hill-side
Is bathed in splendour ; beeches hang on high ;
Broad oaks and elms down to the bitter tide
Spread, overshadowing the quiet glide
Of sea-fowl white as foam upon the sand !
Grey turrets glimmer, through the foliage spied,
Beyond those dwellings which conspicuous stand
Group'd on an orient edge of lightly-rippled land.

V.

The Priory-woods, skirting a rocky bay,
Dip in the calm ; or where the breakers beat,
Toss from their branching heads the shiver'd spray ;
To put forth greenly, whether ocean greet
Them rudely, or relenting, kiss their feet.
Up from the water boughs umbrageous spread,
Bough over bough—the squirrel's dim retreat ;
Flowers bright as Hesper starry radiance shed,
And balmier dews than steep the cedar's odorous head.

VI.

O'er lawn and hollow let the myrtle-tree
Bloom, and the bay-tree spread from side to side
Beyond Mount Appley to the Solent Sea!
Like a broad river rolls the Channel-tide
In which a thousand keels at anchor ride!
And yet, so slippery seems each human stay,
On such a quicksand do we pile our pride,
A battle-ship, huge—heeling as she lay,
With all her gallant crew went down in open day ¹!

VII.

Gone in a moment! hurried headlong down
From light and hope to darkness and despair!
Plunged into utter night without renown!
Bereft of all,—home, country, earth, and air,—
Without a warning, yea, without a prayer!
So swiftly round them did the waters sweep,
The strangling waters never known to spare!
Peace be their portion! undisturb'd their sleep
Beside the murmuring main, or down the channel'd deep ²!

¹ “When Kempenfelt went down,
With twice four hundred men.”

COWPER. On the loss of the Royal George.

² The Dover, between Ryde and Sea View, is the burial-place of part of the crew of the Royal George.

VIII.

Northward, where “hush’d in grim repose” they lie
Bulky and black on the smooth brine, behold
Britannia’s bulwarks crown’d with victory !
What though in peace their eagle-wings they fold,
Fame in her living volume hath enroll’d
Their deeds heroic, destined to impart
Hope, emulation, ardour, to the bold !
What though no more death’s thunderbolts they dart,
Each plank could tell a tale would rouse the tamest heart !

IX.

Whence juts the pier, where stands the terrace, stood
A poor old hamlet by the sea embay’d,
In which a bold and rugged brotherhood
Dwelt, plying on the deep a perilous trade :
Their bones are bleach’d ere now, their huts decay’d,
Their graves forgotten : where they used to hang
Their nets to dry, spire, porch, and colonnade
Gleam ; where the squirrel danced and throstle sang,
Wheels roll, and ladies glide, and orators harangue.

X.

So changed is Ryde! yet, bower and thatch combine
To weave an harbour for the brooding wren.
Round ancient Binstead roses would entwine
Garlands of joy, could meadow, grove, or glen
But banish evil from the haunts of men!
Bower'd Manse, and thou grey pile devote to prayer,
Who having seen you would not see again?
Who, sick of emulation, pomp, and glare,
To solitude so peaceful would not fain repair?

XI.

How deem'd the brethren, they who whilom dwelt
In Quarr's vast abbey¹, ruin'd now and hoar!
In the deep woods they heard a Voice! they felt
A Presence on the solitary shore!
They in the vaulted blue did God adore!
And when the fickle sky was overcast,
And deep to deep replied with hollow roar,
On awful errand while the tempest pass'd,
Their anthems peal'd to heaven borne on the rushing blast.

¹ Quarr abbey was a monastery of the Cistercian order.

XII.

Ye walls, or green or hoary, which have heard
The choral piety of other days,
Let now the carol of the blissful bird
Outpouring unpremeditated lays,
Fill your void heart with orison and praise !
The matin song and vesper bees shall hum,
The pensive bosom faithful homage raise,
The breath of heaven into the chapel come,
Though silent be each cell, each oratory dumb !

XIII.

Tradition hinteth, how in olden time
On false foundations rose the towers of wrong,
Dug, hewn, cemented with the spoils of crime.
It telleth, how the jocund hours along
Danced to wild revelry and wanton song ;—
How sloth and sensuality and guile
Were put to shame by one brave woman, strong
To bow the lofty, and to quell the vile,—
The royal Isabella, Lady of the Isle ¹ !

¹ The Countess Isabel de Fortibus, Lady of the Isle of Wight, a pious woman and beneficent, and just withal, checked the monks of Quarr in their exactions, abbot and pope notwithstanding.

XIV.

It may be ; since, unstable as the sand
And winnow'd by the fanner, flesh is weak :
Egyptian darkness lay upon the land—
In Oreb thunder glared from peak to peak !
Few thought of Calvary, or cared to seek !
The brethren wander'd, to the Bible blind,
Of Hebrew ignorant, and hating Greek ;
And yet, among them, would the purer mind
As pious incense rise, and leave the world behind.

XV.

The troubled waters so would I forsake,
And inland glide on thy cerulean stream,
Oak-bathing Wootton, like a brimful lake
Glassing a turtle-glen ; so tranquil seem
Thy waters basking in the noontide beam !
From either border, glades of verdure rise
Between dun woods and golden, where they gleam
Aslant, or take the zenith. Hungry cries
Clang o'er the deep and jar the woodland melodies !

XVI.

Dip in the clear blue water branches old
Of oaks, on th' eastern cliff, whose ruddy breast
Is knotted o'er with tangles manifold.
Yon bay, in deep green shadow, on the West
Imbowered, seems the very port of rest !
Long may the glebe above in fruit abound,
With blooms of either Ind, balm-dropping, blest !
Love crown the Rectory with myrtle crown'd,
Then, under native elms, lie down in hallow'd ground !

XVII.

Thwarting the current, up the vale, appears
A long low mole bridging a flood of light :
A jutting Mill its hoary length uprears
O'er russet thatch half-hidden from the sight
Down in a wooded hollow, to the right ;
And where the hamlet eastward of the stream
Hangs in the sunshine down the bosky height,
Spangs, as of diamond, obliquely gleam
On window-pane and roof lit with an emerald beam.

XVIII.

Above the river, up from Wootton-Bridge
Unfading groves, as on Orontes, rise
To grace a mansion on the ferny ridge,
In whose high turret peradventure lies
“Some Beauty, cynosure of neighbouring eyes.”
Sweet dreamer! feel the freshness of that hour
Slow-steaming up the lake, when seas and skies
Throw off the leaden cloud, and many a shower
Of rubies and of pearls drops from the dewy Power!

XIX.

So bower'd, might Una, white of soul, admire
The forest-glades with verdure overspread,
On whose rough edge the cedar would aspire
To heaven; and oak and pine and beech-tree shed
Fruit; and young Daphne lift her laurelled head;
And Love for Beauty weave a myrtle band;
And Sorrow, under cypress mourn her dead;
And Hope in rapture by the yew-tree stand
Watching the Tree of Life bloom in the better land!

XX.

Lone on the mountain where a pillar gray
Stands, as a beacon, pointing to the sky,
To guide the wanderer o'er the billowy way,
A prospect opens filling the rapt eye
With inexhaustible variety.
Spangled with light, blue seas about us roll'd,
Heave, or embay'd in a calm haven lie,
And evermore the guarded isle infold :
Cliff over cliff is piled up to the starry wold.

XXI.

Where, out of swathing clouds, the seaborн sun
Bursts on the waters flush'd with crimson sheen,
Two capes hang over ; white and dazzling one,
One dark and frowning o'er the flood is seen :
Downs to the South and West, with dells between
Of dewy verdure, overlook a vale
Varied with golden grain and herbage green,
And purple clover over hill and dale
Breathing, as groves of spice beneath a balmy gale.

XXII.

That vale who wander of their own free will,
From love of Nature whom no cares estrange,
They of weird labyrinth and elfin hill,
Of ferny ridge and heath of ample range,
Are free t' enjoy the grateful interchange ;
To share the benison of sacred spire
Ethereal, hallowing cottage, glebe, and grange ;
Into the depth of pine-woods to retire,
Or up the blue, glad Voice, to track thy wing of fire.

XXIII.

While pleased they listen, or pursue their search
By grove and river and resounding shore,
Pause we beside an ancient village-church
South of the Signal-Stone, of aspect hoar,
The craggy gorge of Knighton hanging o'er.
The rock, thro' foliage peering, red or grey,
Looks down on meadows rich in grassy store,
As April green, and quiet as the day
When o'er their fathers' graves the children come to pray.

XXIV.

Divinely charged to warn and to command,
To cheer and comfort, bending under years
Before the people see the preacher stand,
That Name invoking heaven and earth reveres,
The Lord and Father whom he loves and fears.
Faith, Hope, and Charity, the three sublime,
Exalt him, rapt above the starry spheres,
Beyond the gulph of unenduring time
Up to the Fountain-Light of an unchanging clime.

XXV.

What if the world know nothing of his name,
What though his talents be confined to few,
His worth not flourish'd by the trump of fame—
Is mortal vision privileged to view
The silent shedding of the daily dew?
Who court her favour let the world record,
Bestowing praise on such as praise pursue:
Sufficient unto those who love the Lord
To reap, a hundred-fold, of love the free reward!

XXVI.

To Truth that all who dwell on earth would hearken,
And own her beauty, and in homage kneel !
But should a cloud of doubt or error darken
One human mind, that Mercy, tempering zeal,
Would for the lone benighted wanderer feel !
For what is man, that he should dare deny
To such a portion of the common weal,
Doubt of the mercies which about us lie,
Or, dim of orb, detect a mote in other eye ?

XXVII.

But, lo ! a vein of emerald through the vale,
By fountains freshen'd of perennial play
When all the brooks in Vallombrosa fail !
Glistens the river in the golden ray
Outspread, or under alders steals away
Deep, dark, and as a gliding serpent still.
Enjoy the fragrance of the new-mown hay ;
Admire, rich pastures roaming at your will,
Below the dun oak-wood the quivering water-mill.

XXVIII.

Thither, a nook to few but anglers known,
The speckled trout and silver eel repair,
Haunting some hollow bank in Alverstone,
Or dimpled eddy ; while the roach and dare
Skim the smooth surface as a mirror fair,
Untroubled, saving when the rover bold,
The torrent cleaving like a thing of air,
Leaps on them, darting from his watery hold
Beneath entangled roots of ash or willow old.

XXIX.

Through sunny meads and many a depth of shade
Now gently flowing, now a rapid flood,
Winds the full river, either marge array'd
In leaf and flower of early bloom and bud,
On which recumbent Quiet chews the cud.
Smooth are the pebbles over which it flows,
Blue-vein'd, or redder than the veinèd blood ;
And where the current with the sea would close,
Spread over golden sands, Pactōlus-like, it glows.

XXX.

Below the water-mill, embay'd between
Yon even glide and the tumultuous main,
The pool of Yarbridge round and round is seen
To wind among the willows, roll'd in vain
From either margin back, and back again !
There, in the balmy time, the pulse of May
Would beat responsive to the passionate strain
Of that enchanter, whose melodious lay
Can trance the quivering stars, and hush the coil of day.

XXXI.

It rippled on a rivulet of sound
Under the bridge, and so the stony side
Touch'd, that I knew not, while the trout wheel'd round,
To drop the May-fly where with upward glide
A counter current check'd the tumbling tide ;
To lure, with ruddy worm, eels darkly roll'd,
Or flounders haunting where the minnows hide,
Or wallowing far down, in deeper hold,
The gorgeous river-carp bathed in a flood of gold.

XXXII.

River, not idly did I see thy stream
With natural touches smoothe the rugged stone !
Not idly wander in a waking dream
Bright as the sunbeams which above me shone !
From Nature taking a contented tone,
Apart, yet ever in a social mood,
With Love around me could I feel *alone* ?
The mind with Beauty vividly imbued
Can clothe the naked rock, can people solitude.

XXXIII.

Stream, on whose breast of sunshine and of shade
Myriads, upglancing, take an emerald hue,
Be mine, once more to stray as I have stray'd
Among thy brooding alders, and to view
The ray upon the river glinting through ;
While warblers, from the land of roses, tell
Of love, and still the liquid notes renew,
And overflowing out of a clear well
Trickle, and gurgle down, and bathe the willowy dell !

XXXIV.

North of the pillar, where broad masses lie
Of pine and oak on Ashey's swelling base,
One forest stretch'd of old from sea to sky,
A natural harbourage for beasts of chase :
Under the greenwood ranged the browsing race ;
On forky bough the squirrel built her nest,
And chose a frugal cave in secret place,
And purring from the bottom of her breast,
Gave up her heart to joy !—Pine-marten, let her rest !

XXXV.

League after league the furry tribe would roam
From tree to tree with many a nimble bound,
On food and frolic bent, returning home
With acorn-nut and wilding early found :
Who now may see them run their airy round ?
Perch'd in their room, one richly plumed, and spurr'd,
Crows !—the grey growth of ages piles the ground !
Where bray'd the stag, and where the squirrel purr'd,
The mortal axe will ring ere Winter's scythe be heard.

XXXVI.

Till then, ye forest-elves, in green array
Flout the dull iron hung on rusty nail ;
Ye wingèd genii, chaunt a roundelay
Of joy and triumph, till above the vale
Of Wootton, slow the stars of twilight sail ;
Till, striding on from the Cimmerian shore,
Over the creek, the river, and the dale,
To the dim wood and mountain looming o'er,
The dewy shadows spread, and deepen more and more.

XXXVII.

Yet, though the region *here* be sunk in shade,
No longer brighten'd by the fiery beam,
There, rays of splendour kindle grove and glade,
Glow on the grass, and sparkle o'er the stream,
The rock imbathing with an amber gleam :
Light from the dripping oar uplifted flows,
Spangling the sidelong hull ; the billows seem
On fire ; and like to banner'd victory shows
Above yon cloudy tent the purple tinged with rose !

XXXVIII.

The pomp is marching o'er the crested hill
Of flame, to perish with the blunted rays
Of the red archer.—Now the wheel o' the mill
Rests ; not a ripple on the water plays ;
No beam is on the bough, no windows blaze !
Now, not a leaf, however light is stirr'd ;
Steals over lake and lawn a silver haze :
Hush'd is the woodland voice, or only heard
To twitter now and then, rebuking truant bird.

XXXIX.

Hail, twilight ! winnow'd by the dewy wing
Of owl, familiar with the vampire flight
Of apparition haunting grove and spring ;
Hail, in the breadth of heaven and in the height
And in the depth, ye rolling orbs of light,
While, with a train of stars from east to west,
From ocean rises she who rules the night.
Toil, lay thy burden down and take thy rest,
And more than rubies prize the pearl of a clear breast.

THE FAIR ISLAND.

CANTO III.

CANTO III.

I.

THE stars look wan, and heavily the sky
Droops o'er the cradle of the young-eyed day :
The river-vapours, as they curl on high,
The woodland veiling o'er with wimple grey,
Touch'd by the breath of Morning, melt away !
The salt spray flinging from his golden hair
The sun uprises, now with ruddy ray
The skirts attinging of the gloomy air,
Now mellowing tree and tower and promontory bare.

II.

As when to water Earth, and those new-born
In Eden, moulded by the Hand Divine,
A mist went up ; so fresh is early Morn,
Imbathing leaf and bloom, tendril and twine
Of honeysuckle and of eglantine ;
Dropping with balm, where roses dew-besprent
Suffused with fragrance on their stems recline ;
Or where from damask'd earth flowers sweet of scent
Up to the sun aspire and purpling orient.

III.

In silence, inly stirr'd, the deeps are steaming
Up like a caldron all in silver roll'd,
Save where live sparks of sunny light are gleaming
Over the water in a flood of gold
In undulation floating manifold.
Who taste the freshness of that early time,
Though bow'd with age in feeling are not old,
A new creation in a genial clime
Enjoying, such as earth own'd in the dewy prime !

IV.

Child of Aurora, Beauty bathed in light,
Of virgin purity, of sovereign grace,
Benign of brow intelligibly bright,
Oh! for a finer eye thy path to trace,
An eye more holy to behold thy face,
What time the lily shakes off dewy sleep,
And shafts of fire transpierce the shady place,
And vermil touches tinge the snowy steep,
While verdure clothes the vale, and dimples crisp the deep!

V.

The world is waking—you may hear the bee
Plunged in the nectar of an opening flower—
Bells tinkle, kine are lowing o'er the lea,
And through the foliage like a stealing shower,
Is heard the breathing of a plaintive power,
Is felt the fanning of an airy wing.
Up, lark! and hymn the vivifying hour!
Awake and warble, ye that emulous sing
In garden, field, and grove, till rock and valley ring.

VI.

Skirting the wood, or skimming o'er the stream,
Now wheels the swallow her erratic flight :
On tree or tower no more the rosy beam
Lingers, involved in universal light :
The sun, careering, fires the beacon-height,
Glow's on the meadow, trembles on the tide,
And steeps the forest leaves in amber bright :
With gliding Wootton *here* the sunbeams glide,
There on the white-maned neck of the sea-monster ride.

VII.

The landscape varies, *now* with plenty crown'd,
In weed divinely woven *now* array'd :
Or green or golden waves the fruitful ground ;
Earth for her poorest weaves a purple braid !
A bay is opening under sylvan shade,
To which a homicide, of royal race,
A baffled despot, whilom slunk dismay'd,
And in the bosom of the shady place
A refuge hoped to find from danger and disgrace.

VIII.

From Runimede, unable to withstand
Arm'd Right, the king fled hither ; and *we* reap
The fruit, in the Great Charter of the land !
Here mused the sullen mind, and o'er the deep
Cast, how in blood the sceptred hand to steep.
But Truth and Honour *now* the royal bay
In the wide round of one dominion keep ;
And love and duty hail yon turret gray,
And ivy'd castle towering o'er the watery way.

IX.

There, in the sunshine of a mother's smile,
Under the mantle of a mother's care,
A maid, the hope of England, bloom'd awhile,
Bright as the jewel in Aurora's hair,
Fresh as the rose, and as the lily fair ;
Whom with enduring virtue Heaven endow
The burden of a kingly crown to bear !
A heavy burden for the thinking brow
Charged with the woes and cares which human nature bow !

X.

From East to West a Queen the nations own ;
Her nod imperial North and South obey :
Beneath her trident none in bondage groan :
Erect the negro hails the heavenly ray ;
The red man where he will pursues his prey.
From Indus' flood to Ganges' fruitful plain
Swart myriads kiss the sceptre of thy sway,
Victoria, regent of the Lord to reign,
To hear the bitter cry, to ease the galling chain !

XI.

Rooted in Faith, no revolution fearing,
Of true religion thou the guardian be,
Of virtue the rewarder, Him revering,
By whom kings reign, and princes right decree.
The heart complying with the bended knee,
Give ear to Pity pleading for offence,
To punish sparing while to pardon free :
Life of the Law, impartial doom dispense,
Authority uphold, maintain obedience !

XII.

Fountain of honour ! keep the channel pure !
Who truth pervert, or purity deprave,
Them in thy radiant presence not endure !
Delight to honour the devoted brave
On earth triumphant, ruling o'er the wave,
Who, death defying in a righteous cause,
Reclaim the savage, or redeem the slave ;
Who, loving freedom, rally round the laws,
But on the perilous edge of innovation pause.

XIII.

Untravell'd regions while the bold explore,
The dark t' illumine, and the rude refine,
Let Commerce freely float from shore to shore !
Encourage Science ; let not Art decline ;
Nor Genius build in vain the lofty line.
Deliver out of danger and distress
Who cry aloud or uncomplaining pine,
Till every heart allow, and tongue confess,
A parent to the poor and weak and fatherless !

XIV.

Come then what may ! though hatred howl alarms,
And envy, adder-like, thy path pursue ;
“ Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them !—Nought shall make us rue,
If England to itself do rest but true.”
Heaven guard thee, Lady !—honour, love, renown,
Adorn thy days in number not a few !
And when the kingly charge thou layest down,
The palm, Victoria, take, and amaranthine crown.

XV.

So singing, rapt beyond the sky-bird's flight,
As one who readeth in the starry sky
The dawning glory of a child of light,
The poet kenn'd with a prophetic eye
The Star of England crown'd with majesty.
Visions and dreams divine to few belong,
Or height or depth of rolling harmony ;
And yet, the least of all the tuneful throng
Will soar among the stars, and swell the choral song.

XVI.

'Mid shooting meteors woe and death revealing,
A Star is shining up the crystal ways
Of truth and purity and equal dealing,
Fix'd, on the steep of dark and stormy days,
A monument of wonder and of praise !
Thrones fall, dominions languish, empires cease !
Yet, out of night and chaos Hope will raise
Her head, and Faith look up, and Love increase,
Over the wide profound brooding with wings of peace !

XVII.

In quiet *here*, round beetling Norris, flow
The waters of Medina : tree and tower
And meadow, in the light of beauty glow.
The river-boat glides with the golden hour
Where fleets at anchor lie when tempests lour.
Floats, of all colours, over many a crew
The flag of Commerce humanizing Power !
The far-off frigate heaving into view
Looms, and the dipping oars flash on the billowy blue !

XVIII.

Deep-imaged in the bosom of the stream,
With folded wings the ocean-wanderer lies ;
While to and fro, each shooting like a beam
Of Summer radiance through cerulean skies,
The sails of Pleasure light on laughing eyes.
Up in the sunshine, brightening either side
Of the blue river, towns and castles rise,
Through depth of foliage indistinctly spied,
Or bare along the beach reflected in the tide.

XIX.

Cowes, are thy waters flowing as they flow'd
When crown'd Carausius on the spumy swell
Triumphant o'er the Roman proudly rode ?
Or when (so children launch a walnut-shell)
The Briton floated in a coracle
Of woven willow shagg'd with bristling hides ?
In such, e'en now, who near Plynlimon dwell,
Or lower down by Severn's rugged sides,
May paddle round and round the salmon as it glides.

XX.

The breakers roar, as when the Saxon swept
Our coasts, and Cerdic gloated o'er the slain,
Mocking at Desolation, while she wept
And call'd on each prophetic oak in vain !
Then Wulfer smote her with the edge of pain ;
And Ceädwaller bathed the Cross in blood,
Not knowing what he did. Then rose the Dane
To nip the hope of Freedom in the bud ;
But Alfred overwhelm'd the tyrant of the flood.

XXI.

Where dwelt the Druid, on that eastern hill
Oak-crown'd, young ivy streaks the stony tower,
Perennial verdure running where it will.
For the wild underwood and forest flower,
Lo ! the smooth lawn, and aromatic bower
Exotic, over which a fountain flings
Refreshing coolness like a summer shower !
The bason dimpled o'er with widening rings
Back to the mirror'd Arum liliated beauty brings.

XXII.

Spanning the silver column, I have seen
The radiant angel of the calm on high
Colour the rocks amid the liquid sheen,
And on the golden fishes gliding by
Throw gorgeous hues as of a tropic sky,
And tinge the weeds that lift a starry head
Above the water, or at bottom lie ;
And I have heard him sing the glory shed
On river, sea, and sky immeasurably spread !

XXIII.

Around the fountain Memory will rove,
Where Art and Nature deck th' enamel'd mound
With damask roses and the laurel grove,
And tulip tree with flowery verdure crown'd,
And garden-myrtle sweetest shrub on ground ;
Where, under covert, bloom those beauties rare
Which in far isles and fortunate abound,
Erect or pendent, trail'd with tender care,
Or lifted how we know not into light and air.

XXIV.

Through leafy vistas will the pensive eye
Roam over wood and water far and wide,
Till dimness steal over the Summer sky !
Between those branching oaks, on the blue tide
White Proas, wing'd with hope and pleasure, glide :
Beyond the Strait, a river as at first
Flows, with a slope of green on either side ;
Round Calshot sweeps the flood ; and Eaglehurst
Towers, pinnacled with light—but all is not as erst.

XXV.

For Time will pale the roses of the past !
Who met in joy shall never meet again,
One on the coast of Night untimely cast,
Another left to pine with grief and pain :
Yet, Love endureth ever, nor in vain !
To wake the tender thoughts of other years—
To feed each home-affection and maintain—
To raise and temper human hopes and fears—
Belongeth unto Him who shared our groans and tears.

XXVI.

Bay'd in yon river lies an ancient port,
The royal Hampton, whence a hero sail'd
Thy plain to make immortal, Agincourt !
Toil, plague, and famine, leagued with numbers, fail'd
To quell a spirit which hath never quail'd ;
The spirit of devotion taught to trust
In Him who fought for David and prevail'd,
In Him who dash'd the Moslem into dust
Before the sweeping sword of Scanderbeg the Just.

XXVII.

Launching on Cressy, *here* the kingly heart
Of Edward toil and pain did freely choose,
One in black armour bearing equal part :
There, on the beach, would mighty Canute muse
On the bold waves that dared his sway refuse ¹.
'Mid Netley Abbey Charles ², in pensive mood,
Imperial grandeur lost, or seem'd to lose :
Grey Ruin, round the martlet and her brood
Be peace !—not always found in cloister'd solitude !

¹ It was on the strand at Southampton, that Canute, as the waves rolled about his chair, rebuked the flattery of his courtiers.

² The Emperor Charles V., on his return from a visit to Cardinal Wolsey, in 1522.

XXVIII.

Heaven on thy venture, sea-bathed Hampton, smile,
Wafting the goodly fruits of East and West
From each far continent and tropic-isle !
Be still a haven for the sore-distress'd,
Health to the sick, and to the weary rest !
Among the heathen bear the Truth divine,
To cleanse, to kindle, and to calm the breast,
No more, like Beaulieu's desecrated shrine,
A cell for things unclean, a sanctuary for swine !

XXIX.

Where the red Norman felt the shaft of fate,
A forest branches over antler'd deer
And long-maned horses, early seen and late
Grazing together, or in wild career ;
And there the fawn, her mother couching near
In the long fern, will close and closer skulk,
Shook by a falling leaf, the sport of fear.
Wide-spreading beach-trees, oaks of ample bulk
Abound, some scathed and shorn, like a dismantled hulk.

XXX.

Who would not fain, the greenwood ranging free,
Repose when weary under sylvan shade ?
Unseen, the denizens of nature see
Thread the dun thicket, glide along the glade,
Browse the young branch, and crop the juicy blade ?
Who would not mark the spikes of golden light
Gleam through the leaves, then gradually fade
Into the colder grey of coming night ?
The glory who can paint ? who tell the deep delight ?

XXXI.

On the broad spur of an umbrageous oak
Or fruitful beech-tree, quietly reclined,
The calm profound of nature only broke
By hum of insect or by whispering wind,
Be mine to view the foliage unconfined,
The speckled trunk with mosses overspread,
The glossy, smooth, and party-colour'd rind,
Grey, green, and purple ! what a grace is shed
About the pendulous boughs inwoven overhead !

XXXII.

And yet, between me and that ancient grove,
And those live billows like a flood of fire,
And each green alley Fancy loved to rove,
A solemn thought will come, a shadow dire !
Between me and the hope that would aspire
To joy, the hope that bounded blithe and free
To voices sweet as Memnon's morning lyre,
A silent stream flows ever—woe is me !
Look onward, ye who mourn, beyond the sable sea !—

XXXIII.

The *present* stays not ! grasp the *future* then,
And on the Rock of Ages laying hold,
Build for eternity, ye sons of men !
Vain admonition ! truth sublimely told
In vain by bards and oracles of old !
Shall truth for ever all a fable seem ?
Of man the moral be in vain unroll'd—
A flower—a span—a shadow on a stream—
To fall before the moth ! to vanish like a dream !

XXXIV.

Would man but yield, the desert would rejoice,
Breathe of the myrtle, blossom as the rose ;
The woodland greet him with a gladsome voice ;
The vernal wind tell where the violet blows ;
The vale, the mountain-peak, inspire repose ;
The surging ocean lift the soul on high ;
The flowing river freshen while it flows ;
The radiant dewdrop, and the starry sky,
Be colour'd with the hope of immortality !

XXXV.

Not barren, here below, is all the way,
Go where you will : if dreary tract and bare
Oft intervene, as now, 'twixt Gurnet Bay
And Yarmouth in the west ; yet, here and there,
A brook will flow, a forest hang in air ;
And, further inward, hill and dale disclose
Meadow and tilth, and park and hamlet fair,
And fertile glebe, o'er which when Sirius glows,
Wide wave the golden fields, and plenty overflows.

XXXVI.

Beyond them voyaging, the tired eye
Rests on a smooth round sward, a slope of green
Down to a beamy point in the blue sky ;
Or on a pinnacle of starry sheen
Lights, o'er the yeasty tumult how serene !
Umbrageous Norton and the Yarmouth-Sound
Past, what a pomp is on a sudden seen !
Clear, colour'd, calm, above the blue profound—
Of mountains, rocks, and caves, and billows bursting
round !

XXXVII.

Orb'd in a heaven of calm, the radiant one
Down rolling, spares not of his beams to fling
On the blue deep and o'er the forest dun,
A flood of splendour none may paint or sing,
A marvel bright beyond imagining !
Rapt in the wonder and the glory, climb
Yon headland brush'd of many a rapid wing,
Haunt of the eagle in the dim old time
Plumb on the finny prey dropt from the crag sublime.

XXXVIII.

In amber rippling o'er the purple flood
From cape to cape now streams the level light ;
Now, like the Memphian river roll'd in blood,
Shorn of those beams which made the world so bright,
The Sun is going down—a solemn sight !
Now, on their plummy vans returning home,
File the grim-featured round the Beacon-height,
And lo, till hunger bid the Harpy roam,
Wings folded on a breast refulgent as the foam !

XXXIX.

Beyond the darkening forest, far away,
The red orb sinks—the crimson flush is o'er—
Black are the waters now in Alum Bay,
And black below you round the pebbled shore
Spann'd of one Arch of wonder evermore.
Yawns on the Needle-rocks a magic cave
With rainbow-woven roof and emerald floor,
Save where the cavern pearl and ruby pave,
Colouring with dewy light the crystal of the wave.

XL.

Float on the *calm* into the cave profound :
Ye may not enter when the billows dash
Against the veined flint with stunning sound,
Thro' vaulted chambers echoing like a crash
Of thunder, while the waters foam and flash
Without, and fling them up the shining steep,
Or baffled, tumble back with startling splash,
While countless birds a coil eternal keep
About the rocks and caves along the troubled deep.

XLI.

How wildly plaintive, while the sun aslant
Plays on her plumage 'twixt the sky and sea,
The wheeling gull ! and hark ! the cormorant
Chiding a legion ranged in due degree,
With dank wing o'er the ledge to dangle free,
Haggard, green-eyed, and hungry as the grave !
Shoots the swart Osprey down with headlong glee
To where the diver and the puffin brave
The billow, now ingulf'd, now riding on the wave.

XLII.

As buoyant, on the round upheaving rode
Our bark, one memorable day in June,
When, as the keel through the green water glode,
And ever with the ripple kept in tune,
“The long wake sparkled in the sleepy noon.”
So sang, who down from Audley, “glad at heart,”
Beheld the harbour-buoy dip in the moon¹;
While he who bade the golden genii dart
Light on the donjon-gloom of Logan, mused apart².

XLIII.

What apparition flitteth o’er the light,
Across the sunshine like a stealing shade,
Now hung in air over the beetling height,
Now clinging to the rock as one afraid,
As clings the bat by dawning light betray’d?
A wretch, for food, for profit, or for praise,
Adown the void who ventures undismay’d,
In quest of samphire which the slope arrays,
Or eggs in crannies found and unfrequented ways.

¹ “Audley Court,” three last lines.

² “The Earl of Gowrie,” Act IV. scene 1.

XLIV.

Fond idler! emblem of the world art thou,
A time-worn cable for thy hold to take!
The life to come, the life thou sportest now,
All on the soundness of a thread to stake,
For fame or fashion or subsistence-sake!
As though the cable would for ever hold!
As though the thread of being could not break!
The knell of folly day by day is toll'd
In vain—we dig our graves as in the times of old!

XLV.

Ye crags impending over the blue waves
Which, fathoms down, in seeming slumber lie
Unheard, or only heard when ocean raves
And roars, and tosses the wild wave on high,
To moan and murmur everlastingly,
In naked beauty how sublime ye stand
Out of the deep uplifted to the sky,
Ye barrier-rocks betwixt the sea and land
To curb the headlong waters by Divine command!

XLVI.

Over the promontory's glittering edge
To lean, and down the dizzy void to gaze,
Might awe e'en Danger on a narrow ledge
Thrown, looming huge out of the twilight haze¹!
To trace the current of the solar blaze,
Or in the glassy bay those pillars bright—
Or where yon brow a dazzling white displays—
The breadth and depth and overpowering height
To ponder—is to soar beyond the skybird's flight!

XLVII.

Who can define the thoughts that in us burn,
The wonder, yea the weight of such a scene
Upon the troubled heart! Oh! then to turn
Back, how delightful, to the downy green
Of earth, to commune with the pure serene!
To listen, pillow'd on the lap of June,
The dying murmur of the deep, I ween,
Or burden of the grasshopper, or tune
Of laverock from his plumes glancing the beams of noon!

¹ Danger

“Throws him on the ridgy steep

Of some loose hanging rock to sleep.” Collins' “Ode to Fear.”

XLVIII.

Be mine the quiet of the vale below
Embay'd in golden light ! or then, when Eve
Doth into dreamy trance the spirit throw,
And all the depths a deeper shade receive,
And huger o'er the flood the mountains heave ;
When, on the wold or common overgrown
With furze, the coney doth her burrow leave
For food, unmindful of the fitful moan
Of water down the glen, or wind in hollow stone.

XLIX.

Above and under, imaged in the bay,
Gleam, twofold vision, variously imbued
With wavy colours as the tulip gay ;
Cliff perpendicular whose eagle-brood
Rends with a hungry bark the solitude ;
Arch, out of chaos and the deluge won,
Unworn by time, by tempest unsubdued,
Remain, till earth's appointed course be run,
As monuments of Him who spake—and it was done !

L.

Pictures of Power for meditation made,
Divinely painted as divinely plann'd
Ere light, in virgin purity array'd,
Rose up rejoicing over sea and land
Weigh'd in the hollow of the Maker's hand,
Ye show the Good, the Beautiful, the Great ;
In Whom enrapt let Contemplation stand
Alone, and trampling every thought elate,
In homage bend before the Spirit Increate !

LI.

Awed by th' Eternal Presence, down with pride
Down to the bottom of the deep below,
So deep, thou canst not hear the broken tide
Against the white rocks foaming to and fro,
Or when the waters ebb or overflow !
From height so towering scarcely seems the wave
To curl, albeit a very whirlwind blow,
And her strain'd mast the plunging frigate lave,
And every yawning gulf appear a greedy grave.

LII.

O heavy burden ! wildly raving blast !
And, hark ! a wilder mournfully replies,
Borne on the viewless pinions rushing past,
As on a quarry swooping down the skies !
The seafowl mingle their complaining cries
Not inharmonious, though strange of sound ;
For Nature hath unnumber'd harmonies,
And oft the tuneful leave their heavenly round
To thunder on the deep, or bellow underground.

LIII.

Then, when the founded promontories rock,
And foam is on the lips so ghastly white,
The strong of pinion breast the stormy shock
With pain, or headlong o'er the quivering height
Reel, and far inland yield their ominous flight.
Over the boiling surge on either side
Lean, and look down into the hoary night !
Rebuke the tempest, countermand the tide,
Bid Nature quail before the lofty look of pride !

LIV.

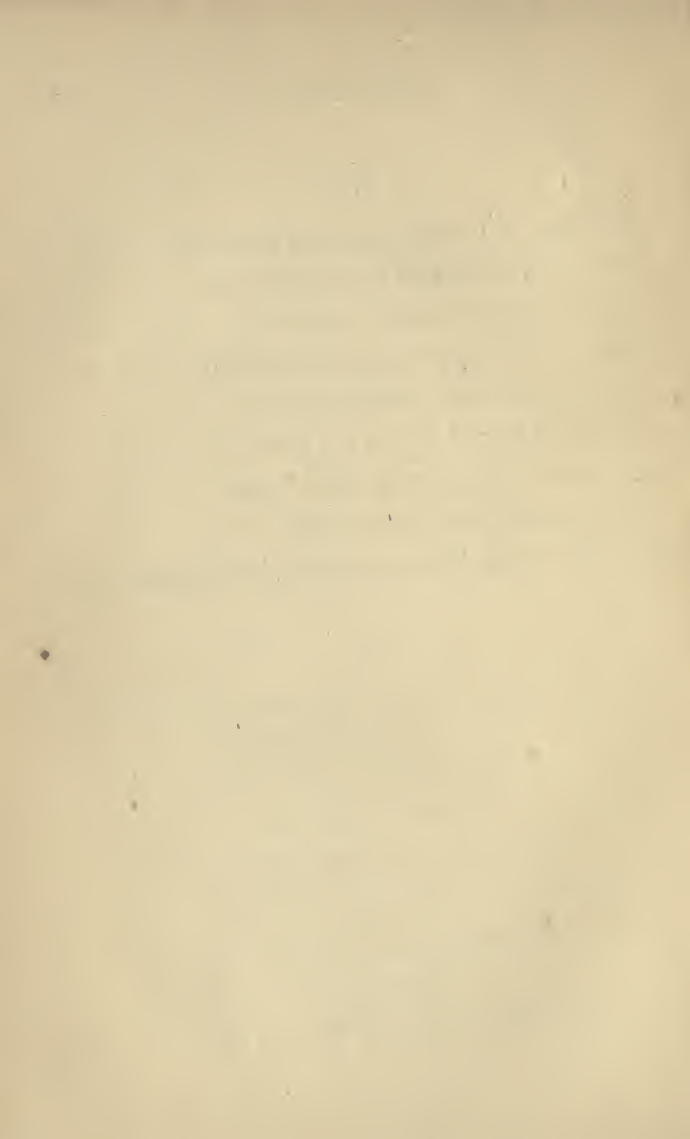
The storm is stubborn!—choose a calmer hour
When, as of wavy gold a molten mass,
The basking ocean owns the beamy power,
And each meridian point of bladed grass
Gleams, and Aonian voices as they pass
Over th' enamel'd Down, persuade to sleep;
While azure skies are seen as in a glass,
And brooding birds a double charge to keep
A hundred fathom down reflected in the deep.

LV.

How silent! saving when a voice is heard
To' boom below, or clang in upper air,
Rock unto rock replying, bird to bird,
Alone, or in a row, or pair by pair,
All happy, knowing neither want nor care!
Stand on the perilous edge! look down—and then
Vaunt if thou wilt, tread proudly if thou dare:
Away with folly! be a child again,
And meekly Him adore Who reigneth over men;

LVI.

To Whom be love and praise and adoration
For ever, gushing forth in one glad strain
Of harmony, one grateful acclamation !
Father, whose bounty over hill and plain
Sheds in due season life-refreshing rain,
Revive the languid, lift the low desire
In one unmeet to join thy tuneful train ;
The lip unholy touch with altar-fire,
And with a breath divine the kindling bard inspire.



THE FAIR ISLAND.

CANTO IV.



CANTO IV.

I.

BROW, that above the billows of unrest
Exalted, dost with Contemplation soar
Into the balmy region of the West,
Dwell in the mind ! that whether breakers roar
Against a craggy coast or sandy shore ;
While reefs enchain us, and about us lie
The shoals of danger, we may look the more
On, unappall'd, with clear and earnest eye
Beyond the Straits of Time and mortal misery.

II.

'Mid chaos unconcern'd, with orient head
Above the caves of thunder, thou art seen,
White as the snows on Himalaya shed
Round Beauty unapproachable, a queen
For ever, in sublimity serene !
Could I but see the pure ethereal grace,
The purple glory and the golden sheen !
Might I but feel the spirit of the place
Breathe on my brow and kiss the dew from off my face !

III.

Fond dream and idle ! thought will ever climb
Imaginary mountains ; inly crave
To gaze on Indus and the source sublime
Of Ganges !—Love will linger near the grave
Of the young warrior, gentle, good and brave,
Who rests where, living, he rejoiced to be
Among the mountains !—Bitter seems the wave
On which we parted, barren now to me !
Time wastes us !—who can stand before that hungry sea ?—

IV.

Full many a hollow have the waters worn,
Though ribb'd with adamant, in earth's steep side,
For very fretfulness, or headlong borne
By the wing'd air, or by the rapid tide
For ever gnawing ! never satisfied !
In subterranean recesses deep ¹
And vast some brood of monstrous birth may hide :
Where smooth ones coil them round, or scaly creep,
The serpent of the sea might roll—the kraken sleep.

V.

Sleep on, wide-stranded on a desolate rock
Of lamentation, while the deeps resound
With endless hubbub, shock succeeding shock,
Till the vault quivers to the loud rebound,
And white-hair'd Terror trembles underground.
Coëval with the birth of wonder, vie
The depth and height, the silence and the sound,
The cliff communion holding with the sky,
The dungeon uttering groan for groan and sigh for sigh.

¹ Between the Needle-Rocks and Freshwater-Gate are eleven caves, from ninety to three hundred feet deep.

VI.

East of that Headland by the mellow beam
Touch'd, where the slopes descending by degrees
Merge in a narrow vale, a springing stream
Runs to the north, as though to link the seas,
Its fountain ruffled by the spooming breeze
When on the stony bar the breakers roar!
Hard by, the sons of ocean loll at ease,
Or wander, glass in hand, the guarded shore:
Boats lie above the surf, old nets, and osier-store.

VII.

Ripples in amber light the flooded bay
Betwixt High Down and Afton's starry sheen,
Round the twin-rocks, time-worn, or rent away
From earth by torrents rushing in between;
One tall and tapering, with tuft of green
Torn from the cliff; one straddling o'er the wave
Tumultuous, where it breaks the blue serene:
So stood the giant, thus did ocean rave
Ere shape to molten brass colossal Chares gave!

VIII.

Mirror'd in Compton Bay the mountain gleams !
Not deeper, under that Ionian wave
Which glasses pale Leucadia, lie the dreams
Of Love and Beauty !—Genius could not save
The laurell'd brow from an untimely grave.
Daughter of song, of passion, and of pride,
Thy fate revolving, humbly would I crave
One boon of Heaven—whatever ill betide,
Strength to withstand the blow, and patience to abide !

IX.

All have their trials !—sweat and tears and blood
Will flow amain, till Love renew the land
Cheer'd by the beam and freshen'd by the flood,
Whose waters, by the breath of Freedom fann'd,
Shall health and plenty waft from strand to strand.
Ye rocks, with wildness hung, long-maned, or bare
As sea beasts basking on the sunny sand,
Relent, and slumber in the summer air,
No more with horror ridged, nor treacherously fair !

X.

The stone of Meeting rear'd by pagan hands,
Had it a tongue, a fearful tale could tell
Of wreck and outrage. Yet, while tempest strands
The ship, or drift or darkness, smoothly swell
The pastoral hills round many a dewy dell,
And spirèd hamlet gleaming through the trees !
In such recesses would the Fauni dwell
Of old, in such the fabled Dryades,
Tripping it o'er the turf, or sunk in silvan ease.

XI.

Tinted by Time, the solitary Stone
On the green hill of Mote, each storm withstood,
Grows dim, with hairy lichen overgrown.
Thither, convened from combe and wold and wood,
The people throng'd to plan the general good ;
There, incantation dire and riddle dark
O'erawed a superstitious brotherhood :
Still rears Idolatry some false sea-mark
Into the gulf of death to draw the wandering bark !

XII.

Primeval seem these stones, pillars of Time,
Ere Corinæus o'er the rolling main
Lighted on Albion, of brow sublime
And hoary, yet bedimm'd with cloudy pain !
For then did evil, dragon-crested, reign
Remorseless, robbers laying waste the land,
Huger than Anak and the brood of Cain !
Ye who the Runic symbols understand
Unfold the mythic tale, reveal the bloody hand !

XIII.

Of Gog and Magog towering over men,
Of Merlin and Pendragon who may know ?
How fared the native of the Druid-glen
Who drove the sacred herd, a drift of snow ?
How, the wild hunter arm'd with spear and bow,
Whose wolf-skin vesture children still admire ?
Their dreams were haunted by a crimson woe !
The white-stoled priest and sacrificial fire
Uprose ; and human blood hiss'd on the funeral pyre !

XIV.

No flocks, as now, did whiten yonder hill :
The red-eyed Urus pierced the shaggy screen
O'er rifted Brooke, and Shorwell's limpid rill,
And that irriguous valley midway seen :
The sacred bull the shadowy boughs between
Gleam'd on the Cimri by the southern shore !
No purple clover deck'd the meadow green,
Nor yellow corn waved the blue waters o'er,
Nor village spire look'd up as praying evermore !

XV.

The painted Briton, when he gazed around
Where now the Saxon folds his fleecy care,
Enjoy'd he, ranging over heathy ground
To fan the cheek and ripple through the hair,
The healthful spirit of the winnowing air ?
Breathed he, communing with the calm above,
A breathing of unutterable prayer ?
Did no fond reverie of joy and love
Come from the leafy covert of the brooding dove ?

XVI.

When Slumber, rolling off the dewy globe,
Rose with the mist and melted in the sun,
Saw he boon Nature doff her dusky robe
And put on light ; and, life anew begun,
Glide under water, o'er the meadow run,
Pipe on the bough, and gambol in the beam ?
Or, in the glow that o'er the gloaming dun
Rippled, where sea and sky to mingle seem,
Caught he of brighter worlds a momentary gleam ?

XVII.

For him did laverock o'er the mountain bare
Quaver and quaver, higher up and higher,
A tremulous star in the cerulean air ?
For him, the turtle over her desire
Brood, and the robin warble in the briar ?
Did they whose coming e'en the wretched hail,
In savage bosom vernal hope inspire,
The cuckoo vocal over hill and dale,
The swallow streaming by the bowered nightingale ?

XVIII.

Did then enchantment o'er the curtain'd night
Hang, when the rivulet, unheard by day,
Gurgled and gamboll'd in the lunar light?—
The world hath young barbarians still at play,
And old, who blind to the meridian ray,
Lie on the downy turf or travel o'er,
And not a twinkle see; nor hear the lay
Of lark, nor hum of bee; nor heed the roar
Of cataracts down dash'd on thunder's billowy shore!

XIX.

So rolls the gleamy thunder where the view
Is bounded by yon promontory bare,
Of savage aspect and of sombrous hue,
O'er Chale, far down ingulph'd, looming in air,
Blackgange! whose sullen heart fierce tempests tear!
Veins as of firestone, cunningly inlaid,
Run through the brindled cliff, layer over layer:
So bars of sunshine cross a dungeon-shade!
So in the vault of death is masonry display'd!

XX.

A rill of sparkles 'mid the blackness seen,
Bright as when moonbeams on the water glide,
Shimmers, star-woven, o'er the deep ravine,
Whose jaws infernal, wider and more wide
Opening, devour the tempest and the tide.
As in a cauldron, then the billows boil,
And writhe voluminous, and chidden, chide !
Shot up aloft, or in a snaky coil
Roll'd up the slippery round with unavailing toil.

XXI.

Down from the crags of Gore's storm-wasted steep
The peregrine falcon swoops on rapid wing ;
Now, in the blue air o'er the bluer deep
Poized, like a cloud ere winds the deluge bring,
Keen as the dart of death, hangs quivering !—
Rent are the rocks, the mountains overthrown
By many a subtle undermining spring !
Surf wreathes the laughing ocean wreck-bestrown,
Sweeps o'er the whiten'd edge, and whelms the yawning
stone.

XXII.

The sands swim round ! the promontory reels !
Back from the brink, and rest the stagger'd eye
On the green mound, whose western slope reveals
A landscape tranquil as the deep-blue sky,
Of hill and dale a rich variety,
Down over down, vale winding into vale,
Where peaceful villages imbosom'd lie,
And halls manorial, from green-swarded Chale
To Brixton's fruitful glebe, and Brooke's delicious dale !

XXIII.

Sunburnt, or frosted o'er with dewy rime,
Points heavenward, Catharine, thy beacon-tower !
Part of a chapel, built in olden time
To light the mariner when tempests lour,
And hungry waters would the main devour !
While love and piety their native land
Guard, and men own a Providential Power,
Let Him be magnified, at whose command
The hurricane is hush'd ! the tumbling billows stand !

XXIV.

Walter de Godyton ! a bleak abode
Thou buildest for the watcher o'er the deep !
The wandering hermit on a doubtful road,
Might hear the crags of windy Chaos leap
In wild commotion down from steep to steep !
The knee of piety would nightly bend
For those who watch, at sea, and those who sleep ;
For him who dared on one good star depend
Hung o'er thy mane of light, fierce race of Rocken-End !

XXV.

Far out the breakers run : with bended head
Be mine to listen, on the turf reclined,
The surge, and see the pigmy people spread
Their nets to whiten in the sun and wind,
By the blue waters rolling unconfined
Along the yellow beach ! Who would not bow
Before the Maker of the thoughtful mind,
And feel it good and full of comfort, now
To be alone with God upon the mountain-brow !

XXVI.

North of the beacon, down a narrow dell
Of shade with golden sunshine interlaced,
Contentment loveth with her own to dwell,
Beneath a roof of russet, sweetly graced
With rose and myrtle picturesquely placed.
A grey old temple pointing to the sky
To raise the feeling, checks the foot of haste :
Ripe fields and peaceful under Northcourt lie,
And quiet are the woods of hoar Antiquity.

XXVII.

As Ariel lighting on a charmèd road
Star-paved, so nimbly streams the river-dew,
Clear as the brow of Truth, a bright abode
Of joy and beauty like those eyes of blue
Whose long dark lashes lend a varying hue !—
The pilgrim, where the radiant children play,
Pauses to breathe that heavenly word—Adieu !
Ere to the north he take his pensive way
To yon grey wreck of Power slow crumbling to decay !

XXVIII.

Imperial fortress founded on a rock !
Clothed as thou art in gay perennial green,
Thou feedest one more fell than battle-shock,
One that has eaten and will eat, I ween,
Into the very heart of what has been,
Or is, or shall be !—Many a martial train
Thy walls have echoed, many a banner seen
Unfurl'd, since Roman dark and red-hair'd Dane
Rose on the tide of time, to ravage or to reign.

XXIX.

Who rear'd the pile (of those usurping Powers),
The donjon rooted deep, and raised the mound,
And walls and bastions flank'd by rounded towers,
And gates of oak, stone-arch'd, with iron bound ;
Who pierced the rock and gave the well profound
To gush, and, startled by the plunging stone,
To bellow through the cavern and rebound,
Wave over wave of darkness making moan—
They reckon not how or why their graves are overgrown.

XXX.

Peace to their ashes ! many a noble one
May in yon Hold have yielded up the ghost,
With all that wisdom wrought or valour won,
Quench'd the brave heart that fired the banded host !
The voice oracular dumb from coast to coast !
With high endeavour to perform their part
They lived and died : walk humbly, ye who boast
Superior science, more consummate art,
A nobler nature : “ we have all one human heart ¹ ! ”

XXXI.

To woe devoted from our very birth,
Conceived in sorrow, usher'd into pain,
The soaring spirit limed and clogg'd with earth,
Like womb did bear us, and like breast sustain ;
Like lips and arms invited not in vain
Our feet to totter, and our baby-tongue
To lisp the God of Abel and of Cain ;
To hymn Whom angels and archangels sung,
Who on the torturing tree for our redemption hung.

¹ “ We have all of us one human heart.”—The Old Cumberland Beggar.

XXXII.

Peace to the dead ! and to the living peace !
O word of power to conjure up a king !
To wake a voice imploring war to cease !
The voice of Falkland !—Where to ruin cling
Bramble and ivy waved of airy wing,
The monarch of a dungeon lay alone,
Listening of birds the cheerful caroling,
Or burden of the wind thro' crannied stone
And iron grating heard—a melancholy moan !

XXXIII.

The dying melody—the muffled roll
Of the night-wind—the night-bird's solemn song—
Awake an echo in the pensive soul
With woe acquainted, unto which belong
The recollections rising out of wrong
Or done or suffer'd. He who lay confined
The tyrannous towers of hoary Eld among,
Prepared to leave a fickle world behind,
Vain hopes and hollow words bequeathing to the wind.

XXXIV.

Wild as a wave, his beard in silver stream'd—
His long thin locks dishevell'd hung in air :
With many winters he familiar seem'd,
But few had number'd ; such a spell hath care
The cheek to channel, and to change the hair !
Yet, as a sunbeam, thro' the stony shade
Of some deep dungeon, strikes the chain'd Despair,
Showing a light for inner darkness made,
So on the king came down a ray of heavenly aid !

XXXV.

Could vernal beauty draw the wandering eye,
Or vernal melody the wandering ear
Back from the wilful waste of Memory,
Then might a region blithe, and warbling clear
Of love and liberty the captive cheer—
Dominion worthy of a monarch's choice !
Enjoy it thou, if Nature still be dear ;
If tears and groanings have not drown'd her voice,
Nor dull'd a heart could move the desert to rejoice !

XXXVI.

Who but a drudge in the golden mine of Care,
Or feeding on the husk of what has been,
Remorseful Memory or blank Despair,
Could view with apathy or sullen spleen
So boon a prospect simple and serene?
The pastoral slopes in noonday quiet sleep—
Green lanes run down into the valley green,
Or climb, 'mid gleamy brooks, a bosky steep—
Towers over hill and dale the castle's haughty keep!

XXXVII.

Who would not fain explore the leafy nook,
Or on the brink of pebbled waters lie
Thy blue-vein'd feet imbathing, Carisbrooke,
Then in the ripple when the trout's quick eye
Twinkles, up-darted on the mealy fly?
What if below the fretful water-mill
Foam crest the rapid; in the calm on high
Above the grey church-tower and limpid rill,
Broods over life and death a spirit pure and still!

XXXVIII.

From Caër eastward have I traced thy stream,
Light-paven Lukely, all the flowery way
With silver threading, where the vallies teem
With herbage fresh as dew, or fragrant hay
New-mown, in which the plunging children play,
Of those unmindful, in their frolic glee,
Who bear the heat and burden of the day ;
Of him, below the pensive willow tree
And ruin'd abbey, plunged in mournful reverie !

XXXIX.

A breadth of light, a rippling overflow
Of joy, Medina, brimming flood, is thine !
Whether recumbent in the noontide glow ;
Or between meadows dotted o'er with kine
And horses, free to ramble or recline,
Thy course pursuing with a quiet glide !
But, lo ! on either bank, a vapoury line
Of human habitations ! Time and tide
Are freighted each with care ! bliss may not here abide !

XL.

Set in the midst of our meridian Isle,
By wandering heaths and pensive woods embraced,
With dewy meads, and downs of open smile,
And winding waters, naturally graced,
The rural capital is meetly placed.
Newport, so long as to the blue-eyed deep
Thy river by its gleamy wings is traced,
Be thine thy portion unimpair'd to keep!
In hope to timely sow! in joy to duly reap!

XLI.

And you, remote from war and tumult, pray
For one harmonious heart, with those fair three,
Faith, Hope, and Charity, to dwell for aye,
Devoutly loyal, rationally free,
For conscience "subject to the powers that be;"
And while the royal keep and walls remain
To check the roving eye of wanton glee,
Walk humbly, mindful of the troubled reign
Of an unbounded will—the danger and the pain!

XLII.

From the dread height of blind ambition hurl'd,
Disrobed of royalty, of splendour shorn,
And all-abandon'd by a weary world ;
With daily thought and nightly vigil worn,
From love's deep anchorage untimely torn,
Robb'd of his children, sever'd from his queen,
The blood of the devoted left to mourn ;
Whelm'd under woe the conscious prince had been
But for that arm of might on which the wretched lean.

XLIII.

He died ! a nation reel'd beneath the blow !
Nor had the nobles of the land consented,
Nor commons been convened to thunder—No !
The patriot, moved by natural ruth, relented ;
The stern fanatic only not repented.
Against oppression when the poor conspire,
And restless spirits rouse the discontented,
The flame who kindled cannot quench the fire !
These in the ruin sink, those tremble and retire.

XLIV.

Anón one bolder vaulteth into power,
Stung by the busy demon of the breast,
The passion paramount in evil hour,
Of sweep more ample and of haughtier crest,
Like Aaron's serpent swallowing up the rest.
Ambition, craving ever to be lord
Over thy brethren, what is power possess'd ?
What of high-climbing labour the reward ?—
Lip-homage ! heart-reproach ! pre-eminence abhorr'd !

XLV.

Poor riches ! joyless pleasures ! evil fame !
For *you*, is ill-exchanged the spirit clear
And calm ; each hallow'd, each exalted aim !
Did pride and glory feel the royal tear
Prophetic drop on Strafford's bloody bier ?
Strafford ! who thought to govern humankind
With whips and scorpions and the rack of fear !
Who, dying left a tainted name behind,
So long as truth and justice sway the thoughtful mind !

XLVI.

Of lordly will and democratic rage
Victim alike, the Stuart ceased to reign :
How fared the ruler of a later age ?—
The right divine of monarchs to maintain,
Charles pleaded, threaten'd, fought and bled—in vain !
The Bourbon yielded his anointed head
To roll in dust : alike their portion—pain,
Captivity, dethronement, death : they bled !
And sterner tyrants rose till nations wept the dead !

THE FAIR ISLAND.

CANTO V.

THE UNDERCLIFF.

CANTO V.

I.

THE tyrannous waters lick thy feet, fair Isle,
Most fair, Dunnose and billowy Chale between :
On shapes of beauty Morning hastes to smile,
And sunset loves to linger—how serene
In the deep hyaline and heavenly sheen !
If *here* an ocean-cliff its rifted side
Yield to the flood, *there* winds a valley green
Rock-bound, in which hoar Winter may not ride
At will, nor early come, nor many days abide.

II.

Wild undulation ! ever-varying land
From the wide water to the crags on high,
That, old and grey and weatherbeaten, stand
A wall of rock against the rushing sky,
The dew of blessing on thy bosom lie !
Pure flow as now thy fountains, with a sound
Of purling like a brook to ripple by !
Or headlong brawling over broken ground,
Down to the murmuring main to plunge at one mad
bound !

III.

Through leafy glen, and unfrequented wild,
And cleft precipitous of ghastly hue,
As under Petra ponderously piled
Chafe the quick waters, *these* their course pursue,
White-maned as they that curl the breezy blue.
A steely fountain by the bitter shore,
Beneath yon cottage hidden from the view,
Springs the low heart and languid to restore,
Whose sources only He who made them can explore.

IV.

The region softens!—Now, in hollow way,
Behind a grassy mound or stony screen,
Let the young ash her airy grace display,
While rumination over herbage green
Stands on the thymy peaks, or basks between!
On Rocken-End though tides tumultuous run,
Earth, air, and ocean have a look serene:
The chough her plumage glosses in the sun,
And linnets on the wold to warble have begun.

V.

Anón a carol from the maple-grove
Wakes other notes on heavenly wings to rise:
A bird of calm is floating o'er the Cove
Beyond the Light-House, where the water lies
Rapt in oblivion save of summer skies.
'Mid glassy stillness, boats, and amber beach,
And rocks, deep-imaged, draw admiring eyes:
In vain did he, the royal exile, reach
That haven, whom nor storm, nor calm, nor time could
teach¹!

¹ Charles II., who landed at Puckaster Cove, in 1675.

VI.

Be readier thou to reap the golden hour,
Glad to have left an angry world behind !
Yet, in the quietude of rural bower
With balm and beauty lovingly entwined,
Think on the common lot of humankind !
How care and pain and memory, dim-eyed,
Will bow alike the body and the mind,
And overcast our life, whose smoothest glide
But flows in silence down to swell the sable tide !

VII.

From vantage-points, in that aërial range
Of rugged wilderness and rampart gray,
Are dawnings of a vision wild and strange,
A new creation out of old decay
In sweet confusion ! beauteous disarray !
The which imbathing, over wreathèd rocks
Clouds as of incense climb the wondrous way,
To wash the fleeces of the skyey flocks,
Or fill with honeydew the woodbine's yellow locks.

VIII.

Ruffling the water, like yon wingèd skiff,
The seaborne vapours take their silent flight
Up, over craggy gulf, and peakèd cliff,
And rounded hill, on whose sky-woven height
They brood with humid wings:—below them, bright
Of hue, of all the sunny south embraced,
Are lawns and dales and arbours of delight,
Rich in aroma, sweetly interlaced
With flowering overgrowth, of elfin beauty graced.

IX.

Nor hearth is wanting, nor domestic roof
By rocks defended from the sweepy west,
Tree-propp'd, each trunk entwined with ivy woof,
In which the wren might hang her downy nest,
Nor feel a flutter in her brooding breast.
Here, wrinkled scar and broken coast between,
Smooth slopes invite the wandering eye to rest;
There, leaves and flowers a thick umbrageous screen
Weave over garden-walk and winding alley green.

X.

Who roam the barren deep, enchanted, hail
Grove, glade, and orchard, rich in fruitful store,
Too soon abandon'd by the flying sail !
Scenes, which the passing eye would fain explore,
Pictures for Memory to ponder o'er !
As light obliquely trickles through a gloom
Of boughs, so streams yon runnel to the shore
Through tremulous reeds when ocean-breezes spoom
Or where on blocks of rag the moonstruck waters boom.

XI.

For glimpses of a region ever new
They yearn who climb the long Atlantic way :
Better to climb the turfy knoll, and view
With me the piny depth, or light array
Of banner'd ashes on the mountain gray,
Ledge over ledge, and rock on rock up-piled
To the smooth summit, in the milder day,
Bathed in cerulean air, to grow more mild,
As Beauty, born of heaven, were native to the wild !

XII.

Breathing of Eden, she will roam awhile
The land rejoicing : hence, the flowery vale
Before you ! hence the crystal's orient smile !
The freshness wafted over hill and dale,
The merry chirp of joy and tuneful tale !
And here, her daughters in the dewy glade
Will listen to the plaintive nightingale ;
Or trace, with moss mosaical inlaid,
The pebbled brooks that thread the sunshine and the
shade.

XIII.

So might of old the lady of the rill,
Athwart a grotto picturesquely thrown,
Lean on her urn, and listen to the trill
Of liquid melody from stone to stone
Till lost in pools with lotus overgrown.
So, on the flowers of Hermel's terraced height,
From whose deep roots Orontes bursts, alone
In brightness, and in swiftness, and in might,
The mountain-nymph would dwell in wonder and delight.

XIV.

For bright Orontes, as in silver roll'd
Through fields most fertile under Syrian sky,
The wavy girdle of the globe behold ;
And *here* are golden apples, hung on high,
Might need the wakeful unenchanted eye
Of dragon or of nymph ; such broods descend
On juicy pulp to dine deliciously,
To quaff ripe nectar, ere Aurora bend
Her dewy eye of light where fruitful boughs impend.

XV.

Hither repair for ruby-tinted fruit,
Or, it may be, by genial impulse stirr'd,
Birds “musical as is Apollo’s lute,”
Throstle and merle, and that melodious bird
The black-cap, he whose foreign pipe is heard
In varied modulation, deep and clear
And mellow, warbling many a dulcet word
Of love and joy, the brooding bird to cheer,
To touch the feeling heart and finely-organ’d ear.

XVI.

Timid, not caring curious eye to brook,
They build where few may find them or molest,
On a lone wild, or in a leafy nook,
For ever fluttering with fond unrest
About the callow brood and nuptial nest.
Their young ones fledged, they fly from brake and lane,
Together with the bird of silvery breast¹,
To where lush berries redden ; thence to drain
The life-blood, glad at heart, with inly-gurgling strain.

XVII.

Enjoy the banquet, for ye think no wrong,
Ambrosian food, and nectar running o'er,
Then sing an anthem to the soul of Song,
To Him Who tunes the throat, and spreads the store,
And speeds the wanderer from shore to shore !
Lift up your voices ! Thou, inspire their lays,
Breath of our nostrils ! Whom let all adore,
To lift our eyelids or our heart to raise,
Unworthy though we be—to muse or utter praise !

¹ The white-throat—a summer visitor.

XVIII.

While they extol the founder of the feast
In strains harmonious, once in Eden known,
Saint Lawrence raises to the luminous East
A starry cross of consecrated stone ;
And, lo ! an arch with ivy overgrown
On which will linger the departing beam !
Let rapt Imagination make her own
The lights and shadows over grove and stream
And promontory pour'd, the vision of a dream !

XIX.

Of *him* imagined, whose ideal eye
Travels a region veil'd from sensual sight ;
Of *him*, whose pencil peoples vacancy
With shapes and hues of Nature heavenly bright,
In all the colours of the rainbow dight.
As Mount Olympus and Mount Ossa bound
That old Egean valley of delight,
For health and wealth and melody renown'd,
So stand our ocean-cliffs a richer Tempè round.

XX.

Strange sweetness, wafted o'er the briny way
From isles of balm, the linkèd hills enclose :
O'er russet roof and walls of stony grey
The native woodbine honied tendrils throws,
And either jasmine, white or yellow, blows :
The myrtle, odorous of leaf and flower,
Queen of the garden while the Dog-star glows,
And lush geranium, child of sun and shower,
As in Madeira, build an aromatic bower.

XXI.

Perennial roses flush the sunny side :
Tints, as of autumn, win the youthful eye
Too fondly dallying with grief untried !
So sweet it seems, for very change, to sigh,
Counting the dewy beads of memory !
The vernal pansy will in shade recline,
Most pensive seeming under brightest sky ;
A tinge prophetic streak the leafy vine
Ere gush the living rock in a rill of golden wine.

XXII.

Not only fruits and flowers, and limpid health,
Tripping how lightly through the cave of sound,
These rocks environ : we have other wealth
Not in rich Enna nor in Tempè found,
Nor on Arcadia's pastoral hills oak-crown'd :
For what are flocks and herds and mountains green
Compared with Freedom, on her native ground
In uninvaded majesty serene,
Lifting her starry brow benighted worlds between !

XXIII.

Here Law and Liberty bear equal rule :
The castle on the steep hath no grim door
To shut out hope for ever ; no deep pool
Of sable mystery ; nor donjon-floor
With horror paved, to pine and madden o'er ;
Nor apparition of incarnate pain
Unpitied, wasting ever more and more !
For each contortion of that iron chain
Of old despotic will, a golden link we gain !

XXIV.

Ere those white turrets o'er the terrace rose
Peace reign'd, and Joy would clamber, not alone,
To where the virgin born of April blows,
Guided of one who from a child had known
Of balmy Nature every tint and tone.
If mortal touch have made the vernal hour
A pensive feeling; yet, revolving, own
The sweet seclusion of the bloomy bower,
The carol of the bird, the breathing of the flower.

XXV.

Before you, fenced from each ungenial wind
By lofty barriers,—by the beetling head
In front, and by the craggy ridge behind,—
Are lawns of light, 'twixt foliage darkly spread
Up to the mounded green, on which is shed
An amber hue: swart phantoms come and go,
Shadows of fleecy whiteness, whither fled!
Blithe fountains bubble up, and overflow
To cool the languid air, and fresh the fields below.

XXVI.

Lull'd by the murmur of the liquid fall,
Let Contemplation from her hermit cave,
Worn how we know not through the rocky wall,
Look on the marbled waters, where they lave
The beach, and give the glossy weed to wave
A laughing ringlet on the cheek of mirth !
But touch them, rushing angel, how they rave,
And rise, like rebels of gigantic birth,
To scale the thundering heaven, and shake the deluged
earth !

XXVII.

This air Ionian breathing very balm,
And the wave onward borne without a breeze,
More take the mind, in their cerulean calm,
Than the white anger of tormented seas
Broke on remorseless Kilda's stony knees !
From hawthorn-den, or aromatic grove,
I love, white-gleaming through the dark elm-trees,
To see the sails drop down and cease to rove :
So rides a folded swan at anchor in the cove !

XXVIII.

Like as a seamew skims the liquid way,
Dipping her pennon in the dark-blue wave,
The shallop yonder crisps the smooth Mill-bay,
Seeming almost the bearded rocks to shave,
Gloomy and grim and silent as the grave!
Now, on the margin of the yellow sand
Which with a dulcet sound the ripples lave,
Her keel strikes, grating o'er the pebbled strand
Harsh music, sweet to those who leap upon the land!

XXIX.

Yet may you read in each bewilder'd look,
Of change at work within us and around:
They hear the brawling of the Ventnor brook,
And see the torrent with a pulse of sound
Swoop from the crag, and vanish underground:
Light still is trembling on the ferny crest!
The Roman rock in its own place is found!
Jagg over jagg the region east and west
Trends, and the downy slopes are steep'd in azure rest!

XXX.

The rural inn, beneath a bosky height,
In a warm corner nestles as of old ;
But they are gone, the brimming bath of light,
And the waved emerald so smoothly roll'd,
And the lone shepherd and the fleecy fold !
Another age, the golden, had begun :
The glebe was broken up, and more than gold
Found in the digging ! life and health were won,
As spire and mansion rose rejoicing in the sun !

XXXI.

Full many a bower of refuge here and there
Dwells in the windings of the sunny shore,
Whither, the bland and uninfected air
To breathe, unshaken by the stormy blower,
The sick, if haply Nature may restore
Whom Art despairs of, come—to live or die
As dooms the Chastener ! Whom let each adore
In sickness as in health, without a sigh
Renouncing all the world of pomp and vanity !

XXXII.

Ye young in years, and undefiled in heart,
Who love your Maker, and his word believe,
And do his bidding, fear not to depart
Divinely summon'd: wherefore should ye grieve
To break the yoke of bondage, and to leave
Sorrow and pain behind?—to live, is loss!
To die, is gain! if unto Him ye cleave
Who wore the crown of thorns, and bare the Cross,
Refiner of the soul from all its earthy dross!

XXXIII.

To love and beauty though ye bid adieu,
To vernal hope and joy; although the bloom
And breath of a creation ever new
Come not to cheer the lonely narrow room!
Though human voices may not touch the tomb!
To sweeter music shall the soul arise,
From trance awaken'd by the trump of doom,
To fields more fragrant under brighter skies
Than ever folded earth, or breathed of Paradise.

XXXIV.

For those sublimer mysteries, unreveal'd,
With joy ineffable and glory fraught,
Now, for the trial of our faith, conceal'd,
Prepared for beings whom the Lord hath bought,
Beatitude beyond the reach of thought—
Eye hath not seen, nor ear of mortal heard,
Nor into heart hath enter'd, we are taught,
The bliss in store for such as love the Word
Of that Eternal Truth from which the soul hath err'd.

XXXV.

Dread not to die, then, ye who fain would keep
The will obedient and the bosom clean :
To leave the tearful valley do not weep,
Where lengthening shadows overcast the scene
However glowing, or however green ;
And toil-drops trickle down the brow of care ;
And sudden tempests ruffle the serene :
Where grief and pain, and evil's conscious heir,
But for the pitying heaven would sink into despair.

XXXVI.

In Heaven who find a haven, o'er the waste
Of troubled waters shall undaunted look,
Of Love paternal evermore embraced,
However tried and humbled, ne'er forsook !
Joy ye, whose names are written in the Book
Of Life, whose foreheads bear the sacred seal ;
Arm'd from Above, the brunt of evil brook ;
Unmoved, though earth, jarr'd from her axle, reel ;
Content if tribulation work your final weal !

XXXVII.

Thou, of the hectic cheek, and glistening eye
Upraised in adoration, beaming praise,
If now and then a not unnatural sigh
Heave, at the thought of early number'd days,
From time and change thy contemplation raise
To the pure Spirit, whose word in order due
Array'd the starry host, and still arrays ;
Whose presence overflows th' ethereal blue,
And earth and ocean soon to vanish from thy view.

XXXVIII.

Who placed the Tree of Life amid the grove,
With gliding beauty spangles pool and stream,
Gives the wild herd o'er hill and dale to rove,
The plummy people gorgeously to gleam,
To carol on the bough and in the beam :
Hail ! breathing pictures, happily design'd
To rouse the worldling from a fitful dream !
To cheer and calm and purify the mind,
From sordid aims and low exalted and refined !

XXXIX.

If the green turf on which we daily tread
Be wove divinely, gemm'd with heavenly rays ;
If sea and sky immeasurably spread
Be a true mirror, an unclouded blaze
Of Love and Beauty ; be it thine to raise
The thought, more teeming than the populous deep,
More nimble than the light, in duteous praise !
Young heiress of the vast hereafter, keep
The narrow way, unblamed, to where the sainted sleep !

XL.

In mortal anguish, under sudden shock,
Cling, like a tendril of the loving vine,
To Truth Eternal, to the Living Rock ;
And more and more on that large heart recline
Which beat for thee and me in Palestine !
When next the May and lily-flower unfold
Their virgin sweetness, it may not be thine
To meet them in the vale, or on the wold,
Or where the rich laburnum hangs her chains of gold :

XLI.

Not in Arabia, nor in Indian isle,
Again may Fancy on a sunny shore,
Fable of balm the wounded to beguile !
Yet myrrh and cassia will the dreamer store
With odorous lime and honied sycamore.
The rolling of the water and the wind
Ere long unheeded may around thee pour :
But while the music lingers in the mind,
Enjoy it, blended *here* with human voices kind.

XLII.

Sweet are the tones of sister and of brother
Attuned to love and pity ! sweeter still
The pensive silence of the patient mother !
Here, ministers of health and grace fulfil
In doing good their great Exemplar's will,
The will of Him omnipotent to save
Both soul and body out of mortal ill !
Adieu !—nor dread the coming hour, nor crave :
The will of God be done on earth and in the grave !

XLIII.

Of pale mortality 'tis sad to speak,
Of faded beauty, and of palsied might,
And of a change on the belovèd cheek !
Come, while the breezy air and radiance bright
Flood the green peaks and yon ethereal height ;
Come, look on Bonchurch, from the sacred steep
Whose springs salubrious gush with life and light,
Roll'd on in beauty to the rounding deep,
Of undulation wild a discontinuous sweep !

XLIV.

Under a down of finely-moulded form,
(To climb, would need the Chamois' nimble hoof,)
Valley and village safely bide the storm ;
So well is each tall tree, each lowly roof,
Secured by rocky barriers tempest-proof !
The slopes beyond, a bristling ridge present
To make the surly winter keep aloof ;
While, in the dale, upheaved, high mounds prevent
The trampling feet that urge the breathing element.

XLV.

To trickle down a rock, and flow from under
Into a bath for Eos dewy-eyed,
The sky-born fountain springs, a lucid wonder !
No more to gleam and gurgle by the side
Of *Shepherds' Lane* ! but with a quiet glide
To thread the pool ; whence stealing under ground
It runneth down to meet th' eternal tide,
Forth welling with a soft susurrant sound
Below the grey church-wall—anón to plunge and bound !

XLVI.

Mirror of beauty ! never mountain rill
From sky to sea so rapidly descending,
Nor tairn, high-overhung of crag and hill,
And wood upclimbing here and there impending,
A varied verdure with the blue air blending,
Did a serener face or sweeter glass !
Shoals, as of golden oars, in silence wending,
Ply the mid-pool or glide along the grass ;
Coats, as of scalèd steel, up-sparkle as we pass !

XLVII.

Red-finn'd, of azure body waved with green
And star-bespangled, moves from place to place
The roach, clear-eyed, and of a pearly sheen :
Of finer form, and of a livelier grace,
Swift as a swallow darts the nimble dace
The gnat to capture dancing in the beam,
Or moth or fly—a tantalizing chase !
Between yon apple pendent o'er the stream
And willow deep-embay'd, the silver-breasted gleam.

XLVIII.

Near the north border, fringed with water-weed,
Where flowering Iris casts a yellow glow,
And shoals innumerable sport and feed,
The carp is sailing circumspect and slow,
Or slily lurking in the sedge below
To seize the flagworm, her appointed prey.
The swans come swelling out their breasts of snow—
The moorhen lieth quiet, while she may,
Till dewy shades descend, or showers bedim the day ;

XLIX.

Nor dim nor dewy now ; yet ample shade
Of elms wide-branching overspreads the stream,
Gracefully pendulous, or broad display'd,
Impervious here, there letting in a gleam
Of azure freckled by the fiery beam.
How the live leaves, as though each vein had glow'd,
Quickken Imagination's noonday dream !
From under Woodlynch, by the winding road,
Peeps picturesquely out the peasant's wreath'd abode ;

L.

A cottage peradventure of content,
If Faith with true humility of mind
Put virtue on, her crowning ornament ;
If Hope look heavenward, leaving care behind,
And Love walk hand in hand with humankind ;
Content, if Heaven the cottager inspire
To see and hear and feel, and solace find
In the boon air, and in the rich attire,
And in the voices sweet of earth's harmonious quire.

LI.

Up from the green-edged water, ivy-clung,
To the grey crag, shows many a gorgeous hue,
Glass'd in the liquid heaven with sapphires hung.
Beyond the laurel-bank, wind out of view
Flower'd lawn and richly-foliaged avenue ;
While masses black jut out against the sky ;
As, on the Wyndeccliffe, holly-boughs and yew
Shadow the waters of the murmuring Wye,
And, swept of sea-winds, swell the rolling melody.

LII.

For those deep voices, let the woodland dove
Here, through the long delightful summer days,
Pour the full bosom of harmonious love,
In tones of tenderness, in truthful lays
That find in harmony the sweetest praise ;
And while such sounds among the village trees
Wind, with the smoke, in many-volumed maze,
Let calm content, if rural health and ease
Be not a fable, dwell in myrtled cottages !

LIII.

If Freedom wander on the mountain height
With the fresh breezes, lo ! an open steep,
The wild dominion of a pure delight !
Or lower down, where native hawthorns keep
Their craggy station, you may climb, and leap
For joy, to find, as by enchantment led,
Young May awaking out of dewy sleep !
Red gleam the pines from under night, thick-spread ;
Acacias lightly wave, and cedars fragrance shed.

LIV.

Hither, for health, ere rock to rock be telling
Of gratulation pour'd from brake to brake,
Ere the tranced dormouse leave her mossy dwelling,
Or finny darter ripple the blue lake,
The wounded come on in the golden wake
Of Hope, that seems to promise the pale prey
Of gnawing atrophy and heartfelt ache,
To check the course of premature decay,
Th' inevitable blow to lighten or delay.

LV.

Though winter yell *without*, a vernal air
Over the land of undulation flows ;
A vernal verdure, though the woods be bare,
Smote by the slant and yellow radiance, glows :
Indigenous ivy, fresh and glossy, throws
Her sportive tendrils over rock and tree ;
Shrubs, as of spice, delicious leaves disclose
Breathing of region bland beyond the sea,
Or bathed of azure floods, like thine, Parthenopè.

LVI.

If earth or air afford a sovereign balm
For pain, a balsam for the wounded mind ;
If health be native to a land of calm,
From the keen arrows of the northern wind
Defended by the rocks piled up behind,
And by the swelling hills, a double chain ;
If restoration *ye* can hope to find
Who “in this harsh world draw your breath in pain¹,”
Come hither, and abide—and peace with you remain !

LVII.

In a green dale with briar-roses hung,
With ruddy maple, and with rowan grey
Athwart an ivied cliff and hoary flung ;
Where yonder Nutgrove braves the stormy sway,
A fruitful orchard owns the ripening ray,
Its foliage only by the flutter stirr'd
Of rival songsters—hearken to their lay !
What emulation ! bird provoking bird,
While Love's sweet undersong among the leaves is heard !

¹ “And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain.”—*Hamlet*.

LVIII.

Here, in the bramble hanging down the rock,
The warbler of the night suspends his nest,
To trance the dewy silence ; hither flock,
Various of voice, in divers colours drest,
Birds from the sunny South and balmy West ;
And here, what time the shadowy vampires skim
The twilight pool, he of the crimson breast
Chaunts to the rocks and caves a sacred hymn,
Nor ceases till the stars look down the region dim.

LIX.

Fortunate ye, who *here* a refuge find !
Who, in the light of a belovèd eye,
In the calm haven of an equal mind,
Content in quietude to live and die,
Dwell unreprieved, and build your hope on high !
Who, when the powers of storm and darkness smite
The deep, and shadows overcast the sky,
Draw from the dreamy caves of sound and sight
Voices of dulcet tone, and visions of delight !

LX.

Fortunate ye, who those fine cells employ
To treasure duly all this earth displays
Of beauty, and of bounty, and of joy ;
Who to the Giver of all good upraise
The homage of the heart, continual praise !
Happy are ye, who note in tint and tone
A natural harmony ; who feel the rays
Of light and glory over Nature thrown,
On leaf and fruit and flower, on stream and sparkling
stone.

LXI.

Beyond The Nutgrove, down a clover'd lea
The Merrill-field and the White Cape between,
A path is open'd to the broad round sea
Whose rippling waters with a starry sheen
Bathe the dun rocks about the bare ravine,
Or group'd or single, whiten'd by the wave
Or black above the shiver'd crystal seen,
Then buried only when the wild winds rave,
And urge the yeasty floods to deluge cliff and cave ;

LXII.

An iron-bound, unfriendly coast erewhile,
Till Genius smooth'd the rugged rocks, and made
The sands to sparkle and the seas to smile ;
And heaping stone on stone, the barrier bade
Stay the proud billows—and the billows stay'd !
Then, up the narrow bay, at ebb of tide,
The barge began to venture, big with trade,
Wafting those treasures o'er the waters wide
Whose household light outshines Potosi's glittering pride !

LXIII.

Mirror of blue-eyed heaven, pellucid plain
Of glassy smoothness, what a realm is sleep
Of hideous phantoms !—rears his hoary mane
And crested head the dragon of the deep :
Air moans, as down the gloomy welkin sweep
Wings of ill omen, round the doom'd to flock,
To rouse the whirlwind !—Lo ! the fiery leap
Of thunderous cataracts ! the crash ! the shock !
Quench'd are the burning stars ! the deep foundations
rock !

LXIV.

In one fierce blast confounding sky and sea,
Quickening the rack of the tormented air,
The tempest rages, with a maniac glee
Leaping from peak to peak, with ghastly glare
The proud appalling, striking dumb despair !
And hark ! a Voice, a rolling Voice divine
Peals on the startled soul, repent ! prepare !
The cloven darkness—how its entrails shine
Torn by the jagged fire, entangled in its twine !

LXV.

The heavens are shaken ! earth and sea are swept
As with the besom of destruction ! hell
Yawns ; and the black abysm which had slept
Through soundless ages—all who darkly dwell—
Wake, and the terrors of their dungeon tell !
And now, out of the gulph, on sullen wings,
Blacker than night, and more than famine fell,
Death on the troubled deep his shadow flings
Where to the drifted wreck the crew devoted clings.

LXVI.

All eyes are on them ! Spirit of mercy, spare !
All hearts are with them ! Arm Almighty, save !
The drowning element but mocks our prayer !
Wide are the jaws of the remorseless grave !
Whelm'd in the mighty waters sink the brave !
Roll on, ye billowy mountains of the main,
Beat on the mortal weed and round it rave,
Cold—stark—unconscious—whether hail or rain
Or thunder ring its knell, or howling hurricane !

LXVII.

Wrecks strew the sea, as leaves the ruffled brook
Before the breath of Autumn ! floating oar,
And boat, keel-up, and hull of hope forsook,
And many a drift of storm-devoted store,
Dash on the rocks or skirt the deluged shore.
Through showers of spray, before the driving blast
Reels dim and dizzy 'mid the deafening roar
Of breakers, landward by the surges cast,
A ship without a sail !—men cluster round the mast !

LXVIII.

Could Art avail her, lo ! a chosen band
With Dennett's rocket-lights the cliffs descending,
To breast the surf along the boiling strand !
Or o'er the summit of the steep impending,
To works of love their skill and courage lending !—
Nearer and nearer by each billow borne
To where the craggy coast is eastward tending,
The blind ship staggers, by the tempest torn
Over the ragged rocks : the mute beholders mourn.

LXIX.

Redeemer, hear, and bid thy people live !
Avert the ruin, save the castaway,
Regard our anguish, and our doubt forgive !
Rebuke the winds, the swelling floods allay,
O Thou, Whom earth and sea and sky obey !
The trusting heart is sweeter than a psalm !—
The winds are veering—Death will lose his prey !
Take all we have, Creator of the calm,
Bow'd heart, and bended knee, and meekly-folded palm.

LXX.

From storm and darkness into light and rest
How sweet is the transition!—sea and sky
Through all their changes follow one behest;
Charged, till the channel of old Time grow dry,
To run the round of mutability!
Did these sands sparkle thus? yon rill of light
Plunge, when the kingly Roman camp'd on high?
How felt the warrior when the portal bright
Open'd, and shafts of fire pour'd on the rear of night?

LXXI.

How would they look on the creation, *they*
Who have not known the Lord, or have denied?
How, on that hallow'd porch of stony grey
Bearing the Cross of Him Who for us died,
And by his Presence graced and sanctified?
How, on the grass-grown Silence heaved around
Beneath umbrageous elms?—Away with pride!
And let not folly in your train be found!
Approach with pious awe—for holy is the ground!

LXXII.

Find *here*, a refuge for the conscious breast
That heaves and tosses like the troubled deep ;
Balm for the wounded, for the weary rest ;
For those a sabbath who the Sabbath keep,
Health for the soul, and for the body sleep.
If ye would enter, feel for all mankind !
Joy with the joyful, with the mourner weep,
Pray for the wilful heart and clouded mind,
For all who wretched be, naked and poor and blind ;

LXXIII.

For whatsoever ought to be desired,
For knowledge how to live and how to die,
Pray, in that ancient tongue, not uninspired
By the pure Spirit of the Power on high,
The language of the Church—her Liturgy !
Pray with the heart ! and having blindly err'd,
Or madly braved the dread soul-searching Eye,
Repent, and hanging on th' Eternal Word,
Each exhortation hear, and ponder, having heard ;

LXXIV.

Then be of comfort ! never more, as now,
To waste and languish under secret smart ;
No more beneath a galling yoke to bow ;
Free, from the land of bondage to depart
And serve your Maker with a willing heart !
To look on Nature, and to love her, free ;
To view the wonders of creative Art ;
To join the solemn anthem of the sea ;
The carol of the bird, the burden of the bee !

LXXV.

But now long shadows over bower'd East Dene
Fall eastward, freak'd with yellow ; shadows sweep
From these old churchyard elms adown the green.
A mellow radiance, slant from steep to steep,
Glows on the sail far off ; and o'er the deep
The moon comes rippling on in wavy gold ;
Ere long to lie in pale cold death-like sleep
On these green turves irregularly roll'd :
Draw near, and inly moved, look on the mortal mould !

LXXVI.

You may not enter!—Leaning o'er the wall,
Think what has been, and is, and is to be ;
How light and shade without distinction fall
On each, of lofty or of low degree,
On young and old alike, on bond and free !
I feel the presence as of one sublime
Above the tossings of our troubled sea,
Come from his mansion in the Eastern clime !
And *here* be those he cared for in the dear old time !

LXXVII.

Mary and Rosa faded in their bloom,
By no vindictive, by no partial law !
I think of Mary 'midst a naked room,
Her pale face lifted up with solemn awe !
A hand was on the wall!—she seem'd to draw
Deep meaning from it ; and, at length, she said :
“ I see a hand like that which Daniel saw ! ”
And then the writing, prophet-like, she read,
And laid her down in peace !—behold her narrow bed !

LXXVIII.

Her sister follow'd, like a new-blown rose
Untimely gather'd, but for ever sweet !
Between her parted lips so soon to close,
The spirit aspiring would its Maker greet,
And only fall—to fall at Jesus' feet !
Angel of death, thou knowest, blest are they
Who virgin-hearted their Redeemer meet !
From whose rapt eyes all tears are wiped away,
Pain never more to feel, nor sorrow, nor decay !

THE FAIR ISLAND.

CANTO VI.



CANTO VI.

I.

OLD as they are, these walls may still outlive
The thrones of Tyranny, the towers of Wrong !
May to "the temple-haunting martlet" give
A vernal welcome, when the stern and strong
Have ceased to thunder save in Epic song !
A righteous Vengeance will the proud repay—
Why spared till now we know not, nor how long—
But it is written, there will come a day
When Right shall reign, and Czars and Cæsars pass away !

II.

The strongholds of the ravening eagle fell
Down in a moment from their pitch sublime !
And now the conies peep about, and dwell
Among them, burrowing ; and stealthy Time
Sheds on their blacken'd faces wintry rime.
O'er haunted Petra flit diaphanous wings
Dipt in the colours of a glowing clime :
Bird unto bower'd bird responsive sings,
And cavern'd Echo mocks their jealous jargonings.

III.

Over the ponderous huge stones which lie
Prone, or supine, or sidelong on the ground,
Mosses and lichens creep ; stems shoot on high
From many a cleft, and ivy runneth round.
Of tropic growth, in hollow way profound,
The fern is branching hoary crags between :
Wild flowers and fruits and berries wild abound,
O'er which the bryony's red crest is seen
Evolving out of folds of purple waved with green.

IV.

Earth trembles ! many a lofty one is hurl'd
Down to the common level of low pride !
But Nature soon renews the wasted world !
Wide as was here the desolation, wide
Is now the beauty shower'd from side to side.
Wild thyme and heath-flower hither draw the bee :
Out of the turf Euphrosynè bright-eyed
Peeps ; and the yellow vetch and purple pea
Bloom ; and The Traveller's Joy trails over rock and tree.

V.

The goats of Melibœus never knew
A flintier path, a thicker hazel-shade ;
Nor hung on thornier heights bedropt with dew :
If oaten reed no more to grove and glade
Pipe—yet our own Theocritus hath stray'd
Hither, amidst a region of surprise !
Who sang “ The Lotos Eaters,” here hath laid
Him down, and under summer-breathing skies
Pored on voluminous earth with calm creative eyes.

VI.

Now, would he gather of the flowering weed,
The slow hours tracing on a mossy stone :
Imagination, out of hollow reed
Above the waterfall, drew many a tone
The tuneful Tityrus had pined to own ;
Then, the viburnum, and the slumberous strain
Of honey-bees, low-gurgling ; and the moan
Of Love that ever will of want complain ;
Would bring the fabled age, the Golden, back again !

VII.

Chirr'd the woodpigeon over wild East End
And Luccombe's brooding elms ; and now and then,
Where late we saw the peering goat impend,
Flitted and gleam'd the golden-crested wren ;
And only gladness seem'd to fill the glen !
But he who call'd on Galatée, though
She took no pity on his desolate den—
And beautiful CEnone, deep in woe
On Ida, fray'd the dream of Eden here below.

VIII.

Yet, "Love is of the valley," would he sing ;
And may the melody, as in the mind
And heart of Ida, daughter of a king
And flower of maidenhood, an echo find
In the deep inner world of womankind !
Love in a cottage hath been long derided
By such as shift with every change of wind :
But Love will little reck, or mock'd or chided,
If they who live to love, in death be not divided.

IX.

As myrtles deck the valley, shepherd, bind
Thy brow with myrtle while her flower is bright !
Leave wrinkled Care and hollow Pomp behind,
And plumèd Danger on the darkening height,
And lay thee in the bosom of Delight ;
And, balmier than the breathing of the West,
And softer than the falling dews of night
On folded roses in ambrosian rest,
Enjoy the gentle wave of a devoted breast.

X.

These rocks have heard a voice singing alone
Of "Feudal Times," and Scotland's ancient crown ;
Of camps and courts with rankness overgrown ;
Of envy robbing valour of renown ;
Of worth affronted by the vulgar frown
Of high prerogative, from sire to son,
From mother unto daughter handed down ;
Of love and honour honourably won
By knightly thoughts and deeds heroically done.

XI.

Oft in our vale, sweet singer, thou hast view'd
The gradual waste, the sudden overthrow,
The clothing of the stony solitude ;
And on the wild and ragged coast below
Dunnose, hast ebb'd and flow'd with ebb and flow
Down from the world before the Flood, I ween ;
And, in the wandering waters to and fro
Rolling, the broad-back'd porpoises hast seen
Flash, as their oily sides glanced on the sunny sheen !

XII.

There let them flounder on amid the blue
And yellow ripple to the noontide ray,
And snort and plunge, while gliding into view
The merry rover o'er the billowy way,
A white sail dipping in the whiter spray,
As on the wings of hope and pleasure flies,
Rapid and bright and fugitive as they !
Yet, earth smiles on—and light impartial lies
On hoary bough and green ! we may not tax the skies !

XIII.

Who vindicated Right, and those free men
To die for Freedom and the Commonweal,
Eliot and Hampden, *he* hath roam'd our glen ;
He who, in gentle Goldsmith, would reveal
The wrongs and woes of Genius, quick to feel
The taunting tongue and the cold eye of scorn,
And the curl'd lip impatient of appeal ;
He who the better nature, left forlorn
Amidst a populous waste, would strengthen and forewarn.

XIV.

For him and me the yellow-beakèd crow
Clang'd, and the rock gave back a rugged sound !
For him and me a deeper voice below
Pour'd billowy music o'er the broken ground
Between yon ocean-barriers iron-bound !
We saw the ribs and bones of Chaos, torn
Apart, or thrown together, lie around ;
And through a cleft by winter-torrents worn
Admired the rolling mist in silence slowly borne.

XV.

There, stood John Stirling, by the lone ravine
Rapt, as the Seer of old on Pisgah wild
Who saw the Promised Land—divinely seen !
Here, William Adams, under rocks rock-piled,
Dream'd of a future home in region mild.
They need not of thy quiet to receive,
Glen, on whose deep seclusion peace hath smiled !
Who leave behind them pain and sorrow, leave
The mortal part of Death !—yet, Memory will grieve !

XVI.

The desolate bosom makes the barren waste !
Yet, unto Zion bound (a sacred way
With rose of Sharon and with lily graced),
Would Judah not admire the rich inlay !
Nor mark in Jordan how the willows sway ?—
Could Ephraim view the river's cavern'd fountain
Unmoved ? or by the clear blue waters stray
That bathed Capernaum, and find no mountain
Oracular, each true beatitude recounting ?

XVII.

Lone region, haunted by the Word divine,
By the pure breath of Inspiration old,
To list thine echoes would it now were mine !
To tread thy turf, thy children to behold
Redeem'd, recover'd, folded in one fold !
Have I not loved them, served with heart and hand
And tongue, and cheer'd them when the world grew
cold ?
Have I not hail'd the coming of a band
With banners from Above waved over sea and land ?

XVIII.

The vision, as in Mirza's eastern tale,
Fades !—and a lowing climbs the pastoral leas ;
And *he* is looking down into the dale
On flocks and herds, and dwellings among trees,
And slopes of yellow corn, and summer seas,
And open promontories sheer and white
Bathed in the blue serene without a breeze ;
He, whose clear spirit was a star of light
To Nell, the wandering child, in innocency bright !

XIX.

The boats that speck the glittering bay below
(Seems not each dipping oar a starry spark)
As corks or seaweed on the surface show,
To view no bigger than the piny bark
On which the squirrel tempts the waters dark.
Ethereal beauty clothes each emerald hill
As Tabor round or Hermon : up the lark
Soars on the wings of song ! a chirrup shrill
Stirs the green grass !—far down, the village-smoke how
still !

XX.

O'er these wild solitudes will Quiet brood,
And hear, far off, the sheep-bell's tinkling tone,
And own a musick in the fitful mood
That waileth in the long dry grass alone.
On many a rounded eminence, o'ergrown
With whin and whortleberry, oft is shed
A mellow murmuring, where flowers new-blown
Droop over mounded heaps with purple spread,
O'er dust inurn'd in dust!—meet dwelling for the dead!

XXI.

Here, under covert, birds and beasts of chase
Couch unalarm'd, secure from deadly snare:
If now the moorcock wake the lonely place
No more, nor stag bray from his heathy lair,
The partridge nestles near the seated hare
And the roll'd hedgehog in a coat of mail,
Remote from human haunt; and, haply, where
The bustard ranged, may cower the travell'd quail
While o'er the gulph of heaven piratic pennons sail.

XXII.

The raven, voyaging that upper way,
Will see the wheatear flit from mound to mound,
And the ring-ousel stand, as one astray,
On a bleak cairn, grown over and imbrown'd
With heath, of old a Roman burial-ground !
Flash'd on the mountain-top a steely sheen !
Clang'd over wood and wold a brazen sound !
And then, in martial order on the green,
The strong and terrible and trampling Power was seen !

XXIII.

Yet, tyrants can be gentle when they please !
I see the lords of earth, with open hand,
Enter the village-huts, by twos and threes,
To lounge and laugh, and oft with speeches bland
To woo the long-hair'd daughters of the land
To be the mothers of heroic men !—
To cater for the captain of the band,
Apicius haunts the shore, expecting when
The coracle may dart home to the Fishers' Glen.

XXIV.

Flood, never more the Falcon-Cliff to drown,
Save when, embay'd in glassy calm below,
Thy smoothness draws the radiant wonder down,
The Roman saw thy waters ebb and flow,
Flush, and with quick and fiery sparkles glow
Primeval woods and dewy glades between :
He saw the water-weed wave to and fro
Amid the lucid lapse, in glossy sheen ;
And own'd a pensive power, a purity serene.

XXV.

He praised our ocean-breeze and balmy shower
From far Atlantis bringing healthful air,
The fabled Isle, endued with gracious power
To free the thought from each entangling care,
To soften sorrow, and to charm despair.
Though human nature be to trouble born,
The general jubilee we still might share,
The bliss, the beauty, whether jocund morn
Awake the dreamy world, or starry night adorn.

XXVI.

Rome *then*—and *now* ! and Albion *now*—and *then* !
Are living homilies of earthly state,
Revealing, how the Ruler over men
Raises the low, and humbles the elate,
And leaves him with his gods, who serves the great.
The mystic Image, part of iron made,
Thrown down and broken, lieth desolate !
While they who bow'd before it, and obey'd,
With conquering wings outspread, the wide world over-
shade !

XXVII.

Pray for humility, great Mother ; pray,
Enthronèd Freedom, for thy royal brood—
That never more, till earth shall pass away,
May blast of war on populous plain intrude,
Nor wake the mountain, startling Solitude !
Our only watcher be the sleepless Eye
That sees well-pleased, pursuing or pursued,
The simple foresters, no longer shy,
Sport in the lunar light beneath a summer sky !

XXVIII.

The wild forefathers of that hanging wood
Crowded the glen, and overbrow'd the sea.
In the red dawning while the Druid stood
And shared the dew of heaven, on him, the glee
Of the blithe squirrel bounding far and free,
Was lost ; he saw the streamlet into birth
Come smiling out from under forest-tree,
And caught no radiance from that eye of mirth,
Nor on the prattle hung that gladden'd heaven and earth.

XXIX.

Dire Superstition haunted grove and spring,
And rávine winter-worn, and elfin hill
O'er which the breezes wander murmuring !
Deaf to the tinkle of the pebbled rill,
Deaf to the nightingale's long tremulous trill
Of rapture welling out of love profound.
To love, black ousel, tune thy mellow bill ;
To love, reed-warbler, pipe a merry round,
Note hurrying after note till wood and cliff resound !

XXX.

Launch'd into light where dayspring's upward ray
Shoots on the dewy leaves a sudden gleam,
The Brook ran sparkling o'er the golden way,
Or glided onward in the lunar beam
The smiling image of a pleasant dream !
Till they whose narrow ken the hedgerows bound,
Who dimpled channel inconvenient deem,
Commanded ; and the waters underground
Stole, and the gloomy vault gave back a sullen sound.

XXXI.

Here, on the border of the running brook
With moss and herbage finely overspread,
The Roman might espy, in many a nook,
Primrose and violet as sweetly shed
As now, and hyacinth with bended head.
Nor fail'd the seasons, flower succeeding flower,
To deck thy dewy marge, O fountain-fed ;
Nor quire was wanting over burn and bower
Of voices love-attuned to praise the genial power.

XXXII.

Lull'd by the long monotony of flow,
The Roman dream'd of gliding time : behold !
Where stood the forest, slopes of sunshine glow
With plenty ripening into wavy gold ;
And here the bean her beauty doth unfold
In all its sweetness to the western wind :
Sleek horses wade in clover, uncontroll'd ;
And fruits are clustering, smooth and rich of rind
As silvery bark with green and purple interlined.

XXXIII.

Kine graze the lowland, while the sweeter herb
Is cropt of sheep, the mountain as they may
Climbing and nibbling ; whom no fears disturb
Of talon or of tooth or beak of prey,
Or poison'd arrow deadlier far than they !
But free to choose, they climb the ruddy morn,
Or dip their fleeces in the dewy grey ;
Their only enemy the wrinkling thorn
On an exalted brow—most high—and most forlorn !

XXXIV.

Not, as in Mantua, may the strong abuse
Their power ; nor Usurpation overflow
Right ; nor loud uproar drive away the Muse !
For Power and Freedom *here* together grow,
And all may duly reap who duly sow !
To wealth and honour opens many a road—
Fame still is drawing thousands from below !
While Duty summons from their loved abode
The few who ride sublime as Cincinnatus rode !

XXXV.

As spreads an oak that hath for ages stood
With interwoven boughs of deepest shade,
Lofty and large, the wonder of the wood,
So spreads before the soul, in vision laid,
A shadowy Vastness for dominion made !
And as the denizens of earth and air,
When fiery Sirius hath his shafts display'd,
To leafy covert quietly repair,
So various tribes and tongues the Tree of Freedom share.

XXXVI.

The free are free to cavil : these deny
The vested rights of Altar and of Throne ;
Those laugh to scorn the people's sovereignty ;
Some grasp the deadly laurel ; others own
A brighter wreath—the poor man's benison.
Great Scipio, 'midst his triumphs, could reveal
How magnanimity is better shown
In self-denial for another's weal,
Than in sonorous brass and homicidal steel !

XXXVII.

How look'd the dreamer, when on wings of light
Sailing, the deep-hull'd monsters of the main
Vomited thunder ! how, when hove in sight
Outstretch'd, and panting ever as in pain,
A finny power flapping the watery plain !
How look'd he, when, huge cities sweeping by,
Wide-snorting Terror with a tremulous train
Glared on the crowd, and spouting flames on high,
Trampled the burning earth, and shook the vapoury sky !

XXXVIII.

The Force precipitous, enormous, strange
To the rapt eye, is passing far away—
And now the vision is allow'd to range
O'er beacon'd height, and marble-breasted bay,
And thunder-rolling pavement night and day.
Streams multitudinous the slumberer sees,
And starry turrets as with watching grey,
And spires amid contemporary trees,
And bowers for Beauty made reclining at her ease.

XXXIX.

Fields open out their treasures to the sun,
The fruits of Industry, on hill and dale
And plain alluvial from the waters won ;
Nor, underground, those ancient riches fail
Which drew the Tyrian and the Grecian sail
Between the fabled Pillars, o'er the blue
To take the tidal flood and ocean gale.
Little the merchant, Greek or Tyrian, knew
Of all the veinèd wealth deep-hidden from the view.

XL.

But more than wealth avails the spirit free
In the clear light of truth and knowledge high ;
More than dominion over land and sea,
Most favour'd Nation underneath the sky,
Thy love of order tempering liberty !
Too long had tyrants tried to break or bend
The will, fast-bound in hopeless misery !
My Country, first the bondman to befriend,
Smooth be thine onward course, and calm thy latter end !

XLI.

Thy waters bear the forests of a world,
The full earth's providential overflow ;
And only Commerce hath her flag unfurl'd !
But where, amid the wide imperial show,
Is Rome ?—the Roman sought in vain to know !
The Goth—the Gaul—had quell'd her lofty look :
The dreamer, turning from a thing of woe,
Awoke !—Before him lay a leafy nook,
And only stream'd below the murmur of a brook.

XLII.

The Brook, by tributary rills supplied,
Plunge upon plunge goes tearing up the ground,
And scooping out a channel deep and wide ;
Then into daylight with a nimble bound
Darts ; and the runnel is alive with sound !
On a green knoll above the rifted way,
'Mid health and wealth and beauty laughing round,
The village-church wastes in a long decay,
To storm and vapoury drift and cankerous dew—a prey.

XLIII.

Whether the dawn attinge yon orient height
Above the billows of cerulean roll ;
Or the meridian beam do more delight
The mute beholder ; or the calm control
Of dewy twilight sway the pensive soul ;
Let him who Nature rightly would explore
Pierce to the centre of the wondrous whole,
And the divine Original adore,
In Love unchangeable confiding evermore !

XLIV.

Mean is the loftiest temple made with hands
Compared with inner Faith, that hallow'd fane
In which are written the Divine commands,
On living tables which all truth contain
In characters of light engraven plain.
Ye who from out the burning Mount would fly,
To whom the Decalogue is woe and pain,
Know, that a contract hath been sign'd on high
Your penalty is paid ! ye shall not surely die !

XLV.

Approach, twice-blest, if ye with one accord
Before your Maker bowing low the heart,
Live in remembrance of your dying Lord !
If, laying bare the bosom's secret smart,
Ye rise recover'd, and in peace depart !
Who darkness universal put to flight,
Will shed the day-spring, or the lightning dart :
The thickest curtain of dissembling night
Is thin as gossamer in presence of the Light.

XLVI.

Church, on whose pavement it hath been our wont
To kneel together with a good intent
In glad communion ; or, beside the Font,
To see Faith, Hope, and Love, benignly bent,
The little children to their Lord present
Seal'd with the Cross against the powers of hell,
Beneath the banner ranged of Him Who "went
Forth conquering and to conquer"—may the dell
Beneath us, long resound thy simple Sabbath-bell !

XLVII.

So streams adown the glen a tinkling sound
Below where, fleck'd with yellow light, appears
A chequer'd orchard o'er the gleamy ground,
One tree low-bending, while another rears
Its branches, hoary with the moss of years :
And, hark ! the viewless with a voice of power
The woods acquainting with their hopes and fears !
The turtle plaining over lonely bower !
The fern-owl round yon oak churming at twilight hour !

XLVIII.

As, where the Rheidol scoops its craggy road,
Gleams a Welsh cottage, lone, out-standing white
From hanging woods, so glistens yon abode !
And see, through branching elms, the Foreland bright
Glass'd in cerulean calm—a gorgeous sight ;
Worthy of *him* who, rapt sublimely, saw
“ The sun rise up and bathe the world in light ; ”
Whose spirit drank the spectacle, in awe
Ecstatic, drawing thence what only he could draw.

XLIX.

Poet of Nature, poet of the heart,
To forms familiar would it now were thine
Colour and thought and feeling to impart !
To make the promontory soar and shine
And live for ever in thy lofty line !
To steep in gladness ocean's azure flow !
Or, in a wilderness of honied twine
Entrail'd with roses, 'mid the balmy blow
To hang the pensive path with blooms of long ago !

L.

Not uninvited by the wandering brook,
I linger near the Forge, with brambles hung
And briars and hazel-branches in a nook
Of gloom, save only where a gleam is flung
On ferny bank, or bough with ivy clung,
Or where those smooth long leaves, enamell'd, lie.
A liquid murmur the dim woods among
Steals on the listening ear—the lifted eye
Of Contemplation feels the quiet of the sky.

LI.

Chirps, on a ridge of furze, the linnet blithe
Of heart ; the blackbird flutes among the trees ;
Nor inharmonious sounds the mower's scythe
To him, who tranced in recollection sees
Those haunts of boyhood which for ever please ;
Who rapt far inland from the stately show
Of radiant headlands and of rolling seas,
Hears, by a river of an even flow,
The measured sweep of scythes the tall grass laying low.

LII.

In those delightful fields, by that smooth stream,
I may not now, on moss-inwoven floor
Indulge, fond Memory, thy tender dream :
The Present urges other scenes t' explore—
And, lo ! the shadows lengthen more and more.
Between wide-branching elms, a lofty screen
Against the tempest when it shakes the shore,
A shady lane and sunny mead between,
The pastoral mansion stands, girt with perennial green.

LIII.

A pensile thatch leans, flowering, o'er the lawn ;
And where the porch juts out, a various view
Opens, most wondrous when the dewy dawn
Steeps and suffuses with a roseal hue
The white cape imaged in a bay of blue.
Nor flowery plots, nor fruitful orchards fail
To prank whatever path the feet pursue,
Nor thicket, running down into the dale,
Nor hedgerow trim, to lodge the vernal nightingale.

LIV.

May the sweet singer, under verdurous woof
The manse adorning on its sunny side,
Choose where the myrtles clamber to the roof,
And long as they remain the village-pride,
Build unreprieved, and undisturb'd abide !
Long may the liquid warbling hither float,
Winding the dewy folds of eventide,
In modulation note involving note
From covert green outpour'd, to brooding Love devote !

LV.

Listen, ascending on the midnight air
The wingèd wonder, listen to the lay,
Nor weary Sleep with unavailing prayer :
The tuneful stranger soon will pass away
And leave you longing ; hearken, while ye may !
Nor other notes of lower pitch disdain,
The native carol of the common day,
The mellow pipe of merle, or the clear strain
Of robin or of wren about your window-pane.

LVI.

Attuned to Nature, may your hearts rejoice,
From honeysuckle-porch and ivy-bower
To welcome harmony's domestic voice,
At morn and noon and even's pensive hour
In joy uplifted to the genial power !
Full be the song, and sacred be the rest
In mossy cell when musky roses flower !
May no rude eye profane, nor hand molest
The sanctuary of trust ! the quiet of the breast !

LVII.

Adown the Vale of Shanklin, fenced from storm
By piny bluff, high ridge, or gradual hill,
Lies in the lap of noon the village warm.
Fields, groves, and gardens with enchantment fill
The glen, responsive to the gurgling rill ;
While song-birds various, each to nature true,
Avoiding Winter, come and go at will ;
And a new Spring to find, or Summer new,
The leafy path of love instinctively pursue.

LVIII.

Thin wreaths of vapour from among the trees
Ascend in silence, blended here and there
Above a group of vine-clad cottages,
Whose hanging eaves invite the plummy pair
To build, while yet the forest-boughs are bare.
Blest is the swallow, privileged to rove
Through vernal regions of serener air,
Or to lie dormant under beechen grove,
In hollow bank or brae with thicket interwove.

LIX.

Changed is that orchard sloping to the stream—
Those elms no longer overhang the road—
But our old cottage doth unalter'd seem,
Of joy domestic long the dear abode !
The stream is flowing as it ever flow'd
At mellow eventide, persuading sleep—
The leaves are glowing as they ever glow'd
Smote by the setting sun : the snowy steep,
Rose-tinted as of old, bathes in the conscious deep.

LX.

Peak over peak, into the blue air rise
Cliffs to the south—a solitary scene!
The brooding partridge under covert lies,
Cowering beneath a prickly tuft of green,
Whilst high in air the quivering hawk is seen.
Oft, in the twilight of a day in June,
While down—far down—lay in the deep serene
The folded wings of Calm, I linger'd—soon
In crimson o'er the surge to mark the rising moon.

LXI.

Where towers the Roman crest with forest crown'd,
A gay pavilion wove of summer air
In gold and purple, o'er the wavy ground
Hangs, less abiding than the tents of Care!
Whence soar'd the eagle, thither doves repair
At close of day to their appointed rest,
On bosky ridge or promontory bare,
To roost in crannies high above the quest
Of urchin idly moved to clamber to the nest.

LXII.

These hanging gardens to the South and East
Would oft with bud and blossom, red or white
Or purpled o'er, the crimson Loxia feast;
And hither nectarine juices would invite
Shy birds to banquet when the sun shone bright.
Elms border still a deep and shady lane—
The laurel-hedgerow twinkles, starr'd with light
As in the morn of life : while these remain,
And others, once my care—for some I seek in vain.

LXIII.

Melodious sycamore, whose depth of shade
Nor pattering rain could pierce, nor fiery beam,
Thy murmurous foliage many a time hath made
Fit umbrage for the poet's noonday dream.
Oft, when the shadow with the sunny gleam
In trembling rapture over rock and tree
Danced to the music of the mountain-stream,
A revelation might the dreamer see
Of subtle shapes too fine for unenchanted ee.

LXIV.

Alone with Nature, he hath heard and seen
Fledged with delight the forest-children play ;
Caught the blue billow rolling in between
The gnarlèd oaks' fantastical array,
And the white promontory's lofty sway ;
Mark'd the wild cherry brightening into bloom,
Or in the tinted vesture of decay ;
Hail'd the white thorn and yellow-flowering broom,
And cross a beamy shaft the lightly glancing plume.

LXV.

The scythe of ruin hath not mow'd thee down,
Green field of Memory, nor mortal hand
Pluck'd up, nor winter wither'd with a frown !
Betwixt imbowering elms of high command
I see once more the lowly cottage stand,
Clothed with Oporto's richly-colour'd vine
The sunshine needing of her native land
The grape to ripen into generous wine,
Too liberal of leaf, of too luxuriant twine.

LXVI.

From foliage purpling o'er a vine-clad wall,
From "coigne of vantage" under beam befriending,
What time for food her feather'd nestlings call,
Hark to the fly-catcher, with never-ending
Care of her young, a plaintive cry forth sending !
There, flower-inwoven, where rough trunks uphold
A pensile thatch o'er pavèd way impending,
The fond one hovers, bolder and more bold
Through Him whose wings of love her little ones enfold.

LXVII.

There, stood an arbour, round with ivy wrought,
With woodbine and laburnum braided o'er
And hoary clematis, with perfume fraught :
The lining was of moss, and all the floor
Of shining pebbles such as pave the shore.
With moss the dormouse lined her winter den,
Cull'd from that arbour, an unfailing store ;
The goldfinch thence, and golden-crested wren,
Would draw, and weave a web, the glory of the glen !

LXVIII.

Change came in Eden over fruit and flower !
Can mortal man of time and change complain ?
Alas ! for one who graced our garden-bower !
For fairy forms, a nimble-footed train,
In vain I listen ! and I look in vain !
They come not ! they are silent !—Ye who bend
Beneath affliction, under woe and pain,
Remember whence ye came and whither tend—
How change shall be no more, and time shall have an end.

LXIX.

The world we lean on is a hollow reed !
The joy we doat on is a dangerous snare,
For ever failing us in time of need,
For ever fleeting, insecure, and rare
Of full fruition, hedged with thorny care !
Since all have gather'd of the fatal tree
The fruit forbidden, treacherously fair ;
Since all have chosen, bitter though it be,
The knowledge dearly bought of evil—who can flee ?

LXX.

Ere blight had fall'n on Eden's bloomy prime,
Time glided by one current of content :
The soul immortal, free, erect, sublime,
In homage only to the Maker bent,
On beauty and on harmony intent,
Enjoy'd creation : duty with delight,
And love with reverence, were duly blent :
The spirit soar'd beyond the solar height—
Her fall hath dimm'd the day, and scared the dreams of
night.

LXXI.

With sin who dally, soon or late shall know
The venom of her sting!—Who court applause
And dream of glory, shall awake to woe !
The patriot toiling in his country's cause—
The builder up or puller down of laws,
As zeal or indignation urges him,
In mid-career how gladly would he pause !
Condemn'd to toil till eye and heart grow dim—
The darling of a day ! the victim of a whim !

LXXII.

Against vain-glory have ye vainly striven,
Against forbidden pleasure, by the base
And stern Usurper into exile driven?
For true repentance have ye found no place,
None found for pardon and redeeming grace¹?
Cry, with the sinner who himself abhorr'd
Sole author of his own unhappy case,
“ We of our deeds receive the due reward :
Remember me when Thou art in thy kingdom, Lord² ! ”

LXXIII.

Who know their nature to be fall'n and weak,
In good unstable, liable to stray ;
Who, self-convicted, cease to proudly speak,
And turn from visions ill-becoming clay
That hath no morrow—dying day by day—
They, if the bended will in daily prayer
Follow the light, will open to the ray
Divine, however dimm'd by grief and care,
Not to be quench'd in death, triumphant o'er despair !

¹ “ Is there no place
Left for repentance, none for pardon left ? ”—*Paradise Lost*, Book iv.

² Luke xxiii. 41, 42.

LXXIV.

Now, in the wake of her who rules the night,
The crispèd waters ripple to the shore
In spangles numerous as the drops of light
That star the sands, or steep the mountain hoar,
Or trickle down the leaves—a silvery shower.
With touching beauty are the clouds imbued,
Roll'd from the west—the cape is crimson'd o'er—
By thought and feeling temper'd and subdued,
Who would not take thy path, prophetic Solitude?

LXXV.

That each might duly weigh the coming hour
As all can weigh the past!—When hope and fear
Hung equipoised, then was the ghastly Power,
The shadow of the Future drawing near,
Check'd by th' Omnipotent in mid-career,
The Shadow going back upon the dial!
As when, in days of old, the Hebrew seer
From Hezekiah in the time of trial
Waved the dread angel back who bare the deadly vial!

LXXVI.

And what is length of days, but, day by day,
For hope cut off and buried love to groan,
While dimness steals over our downward way,
As now, where tangled round and overgrown
Glides the dark river down the yawning stone!
A voice for ever hums a muffled tune
In the thick curtain round the torrent thrown,
A burden low and lower dropt at noon,
And high and higher raised up with the rising moon.

LXXVII.

Though now it trickle with a summer sound,
The floods of Winter down the dizzy steep
Bound, and from off the nether rock rebound!
A dewy veil enwoven o'er the deep
Conceals the cauldron into which they leap;
About whose margin, purple, green and hoar,
Vivid and smooth, perennial mosses creep:
Starr'd is the rock, or freckled as with ore
Of sunburnt Havilah or Ophir's golden shore.

LXXVIII.

Enter, a dank and hollow way descending
Of edge precipitous, whose dripping springs
Imbue those colours beautifully blending ;
While, over many a weed that climbs and clings,
The shatter'd runnel spray refreshing flings.
Black is the basin whence the shooting stream
Shouts to the welkin till the cavern rings ;
The bursting waters through the gloaming beam
White as a flake of snow—a momentary gleam !

LXXIX.

Trees, on the top of either craggy wall,
Larch, pine, and poplar, leaning over, throw
A varied verdure round the waterfall :
Tenacious alders their dark leaves below
Dip, or down sliding, after frost and snow,
Into the vortex of the reflux wave,
Sweep to the sea—more often in the flow
Of welcome streams their thirsty roots to lave,
Where rocks of iron hue the shady valley pave.

LXXX.

By winding stairs, laboriously made
Of crumbling earth, scoop'd out, and osier-bound,
Descend, and mark how Nature has array'd
The poor and naked, and about them wound
Her loving arms, to gladden all the ground.
Above—below you—falls the narrow river,
A rimy curtain round the cave of Sound,
In whose white folds the waters coil and shiver,
Bathing the sable base—methinks, I feel it quiver !

LXXXI.

Dug deep and deeper, opening out more wide,
The flood-worn hollow doth in beauty wind
Of divers colours : o'er the darker side
Innumerable mosses spreading unconfined,
Vary the ground : scarr'd oaks and undermined
Hang on the jaggèd edge ; while furze and fern,
And each entangling thorn, the brighter bind.
By rock or tree rebuked at every turn,
You hear, in foliage hid, the murmur of the burn.

LXXXII.

And, hark ! a sound more solemn—a long sweep
Of mournful cadence—passing like a dream—
Again, and yet again—the rolling deep—
A flood of glory when the morning beam
Darts through the dewy glen a yellow gleam,
Waves over rock and undulating wood,
Glowes on the grass and sparkles o'er the stream !
Now dim, befitting that ideal mood
Which haunts the twilight-path of pensive solitude.

LXXXIII.

Now, not a bird is piping on the bough,
Nor insect flashing through the summer-air ;
Now, not a beam is on the tower'd brow,
Nor on the window late one fiery glare,
Nor on those Druid-boughs hoary and bare.
Now, not a sound of labour or of play
Arouses Echo from her rocky lair—
The blue of heaven has faded into gray—
A filmy vapour hangs over the hollow way.

LXXXIV.

Veil'd are the branches, to the South inclined,
Fruitfully bended o'er the dripping well ;
Veil'd are the flowering arbours intertwined
Around the mazy brook. All ye who dwell
Hard by, adown the labyrinthian dell ;
And thou, in darkness piled above the deep,
About whose cavern'd base the billows swell
And burst in thunder pealing up the steep,
Adieu !—the star of Eve points to the cave of Sleep.

LXXXV.

A hush is over all ! a gradual gloom
Involves the grassy couch and mossy nest,
All silent, save the beetle heard to boom
Along the vale of Twilight ! all at rest,
All but the human heart—and billowy breast !
Each beat of which wild-heaving you may hear,
The pulse of feeling never all-suppress'd,
A rolling harmony profound and clear,
To raise the solemn thought, and lull the lingering ear.

LXXXVI.

Voice ever sounding, whose stupendous song
Is wove of wonder, terror, and delight,
Grand hierarch, leader of the tuneful throng,
From out of chaos and primeval night
Call'd into being by the Word of Might,
Witness of God's unfathomable ways,
Sing to the Lord!—and ye who roll in light,
With one accord the full hosanna raise,
While, rapt as in a trance, I listen—musing praise!

LXXXVII.

O Thou that drawest round the folding-hour
A dewy curtain over beast and bird,
Bedew the fever'd heart! sustain with power
The soul immortal, still divinely stirr'd
To mourn the mortal nature which hath err'd.
On all who love Thee, when at eve they pray
Or lift those heavings only Thou hast heard,
Drop balm; and light them on their early way,
That each may duly bear the burden of the day.



